

# 2d artist

Digital Painting Magazine  
Issue 091 July 2013

## Video Game Artist Donglu Yu

Video game artist Donglu Yu shares some industry advice and experiences of her career so far.

## Dreamworks Animation

Nicolas Weis shares some of his fascinating sketches, including development work for *The Croods*.

## 10 inspirational images

Jason Seiler and Markus Lovadina feature in this issue's gallery selection of our top ten best images from around the digital world.

Discover how to paint villainous characters as Charlie Bowater takes us through her process of painting 'Moonshine'.

# CAPTURING VILLAINOUS EXPRESSIONS

## Paint enchanting characters

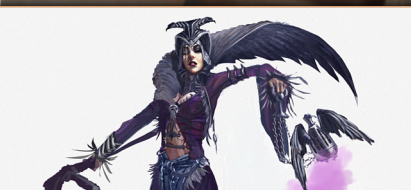
Talented artist **YongSub Noh** shares his techniques in Photoshop as he conjures up and creates a stunning character.

## Create Costumes

Enhance the dimensions of your character with **Takumer Homma's** Photoshop painting guide to magical outfits.

## Evolving characters

**Richard Tilbury** demonstrates his digital-painting techniques when conceptualising characters who have evolved for arctic conditions.







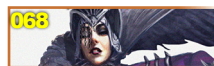
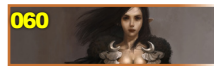
## Editorial

If you don't know where to start when it comes to designing or you just want to brush up on adding depth to your work, then July's issue of *2dArtist* is for you! Our vibrant tutorial section this month is filled to the brim with character designing delights to guide you through the process of creating your own characters.

Whether you want to discover how to create and paint villains to a games brief, which **Charlie Bowater** covers in the design of the character Moonshine, or learn how to tie your character into a narrative with the addition of costume and accessories like **Takumer Homma** does in his step-by-step painting guide to magical outfits, this issue is on hand to provide you with everything you need to know.

New this month is the first installment of a six-part series covering the creation of a fantasy world by **YongSub Noh**. In this first chapter this talented artist covers tips and techniques to create and digitally paint a fantasy character to fit into your fictional universe.

Alongside these great tutorials, we have an insightful interview, a project overview of *Landscape Speedpaint* by **Byzwa Dher**, an evolutionary character tutorial and, as always, visually stunning work from some of the most exciting names in the digital world. An issue not to be missed!



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Digital Art Masters: Volume 7 – Free Chapter

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Image by Edvige Faini







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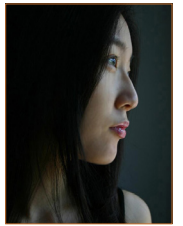
Every month many artists from around the world contribute to **3DCreative** and **2DArtist** magazines. Here you can find out a bit more about them! If you would like to be a part of **3DCreative** or **2DArtist** magazine, please contact: [jess@3dtotal.com](mailto:jess@3dtotal.com)



### Donglu Yu

Donglu Yu is a concept artist working in the video game industry. Donglu has been working on *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, *Assassin's Creed III* and *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*.

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### Richard Tilbury

Richard Tilbury has had a passion for drawing since being a couple of feet tall. He studied Fine Art and was eventually led into the realm of computers several years ago. His brushes have been dissolving in white spirit since the late nineties and his graphics tablet has become their successor. Richard still sketches regularly and now balances his time between 2D and 3D, although drawing will always be closest to his heart.

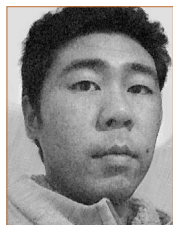
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### Charlie Bowater

Born in the UK in 1988 and raised on 90's cartoons, Charlie Bowater spent her childhood drawing her favourite characters and insisting she'd grow up to be an animator. A lot has changed since then but her love of art hasn't. Charlie is an illustrator and self taught digital artist. She lives in Newcastle upon Tyne and works as a concept artist for Atomhawk.

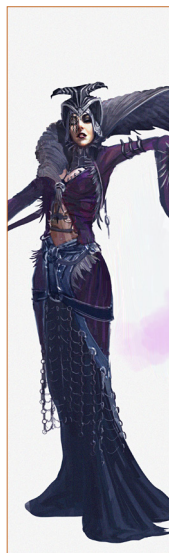
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### Takumer Homma

Takumer Homma is a freelance concept artist and a digital illustrator in the entertainment industry, who made a transition from the automotive industry in 2012. He dreams and aims to work in films!

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## Would You Like To Contribute To 3DCreative Or 2DArtist Magazines?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, 'making of' writers, and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: [jess@3dtotal.com](mailto:jess@3dtotal.com)



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"There are amazing talents out there; their creative energy is also another source of inspiration, which keeps me continuing on my artistic journey"

# DONGLU YU

Donglu Yu talks to *2DArtist* magazine about her career and techniques as a concept artist in the gaming industry. Donglu shares with us what it's like working with the creative team at Ubisoft.



Hi Donglu, thanks for taking the time to have a chat with us! Could you tell us a bit about yourself and how you got into the digital art industry?

Hi, thanks for the interview, it is really nice to chat a bit about my career path and what I have doing recently.

First, I studied illustration and design in my college years and film animation during my university years, where I learnt digital tools such as Photoshop, Illustrator, Maya and 3D Studio. After graduation, I started working as a 3D artist and texture artist, but soon I felt that I needed more creative content in my daily job routine. Since I had a solid painting background because of the early training, I decided to make a switch to concept art. I spent almost four months building up my portfolio and applied to Eidos in Montreal, where I got a job offer one week later.

**What was it about digital tools that made you want to work with them, and how do you feel it enhances and helps you get feelings and ideas across?**

What I enjoy the most with digital tools is their flexibility and fast-paced workflow. I am in an industry where speed is everything; I can't

afford to wait hours for my oil paint to dry on the canvas or to have coffee spilled accidentally on my line work so I have to start everything over. I started to move away completely from 3D; I mostly use Photoshop and ArtRage for my job.

Photoshop can allow me to put down my composition quickly, making changes to the scale and adding photos as texture bases for the paintings, and I rely on ArtRage to bring back a little bit of that traditional painting feel to my work.

**Could you tell us about your creative process and the software that you use?**

The software that I use the most is Photoshop; the new CS6 has the automatic backup feature now, which is really useful when you have an unexpected crash. Three years ago, I was still used to starting some line work on paper before continuing my painting in Photoshop, but now I just start in Photoshop at the beginning.

I usually have two different approaches to my paintings: starting with a black and white thumbnail or starting directly with a photo reference, which has an interesting architectural element or intricate lighting.

**I love the way you use the power of light in your paintings. What is it about this that attracts you and can you tell us more?**

I find the right lighting is essential for giving an immersive ambiance to a scene. Sometimes good lighting can save you a lot of time when painting details, yet make the painting emotionally more powerful too.

I have a lot of people asking me how I paint lighting in my artworks. My answer is simple: I always draw inspiration from photo references. The good choice of lighting is not a result of happy coincidence. The chosen lighting has to showcase the focal point of your scene and the story you want to tell.

The easy way is to pick an angle for the main light source in a way that the lighting can directly hit on one facet of your main subject matter or backlight them. The others elements in the scene can be supported with other smaller, artificial light sources, the ambient light or even the fog.

**What do you feel is most important part of this process that you like to focus on?**

What I enjoy the most is the early sketching











stage where I have to figure out the right composition, color palette, lighting condition, and silhouette of the architecture and the characters. I can easily do a dozen of those before starting the final paintings. I save all the sketches; they are so valuable to me because they are filled with my mind mapping ideas and provide a visual record of the entire creative thinking process. For me, in a way, they are even more precious than the final painting.

Just a side note for the young artists building their concept art portfolios: don't just include final pieces in your portfolio, but also throw in black and white thumbnails, silhouettes studies and color/mood sketches. They can really enrich your portfolio in the sense that art directors will not only see your rendering skills, but also the thinking process behind your artwork.

#### Where do you draw your influences from?

I draw inspiration from movies, books, games and mostly from trips. I would love to have more free time so I can travel around the world to see different cultures. Traveling also gives me the opportunity to take lots of reference pictures. They are precious materials, which provide me with inspiration for the subject matters that I want to depict in my drawings.

I am also very informed about other artists in the digital art field thanks to the different online



















**"For the young artists or students who want to start their career in the concept art field, my advice is to learn the art foundations really well"**

forums. There are amazing talents out there; their creative energy is also another source of inspiration, which keeps me continuing on my artistic journey.

**What has been the favorite project that you have worked on to date?**

My favorite project up to this point has definitely been *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*. I had

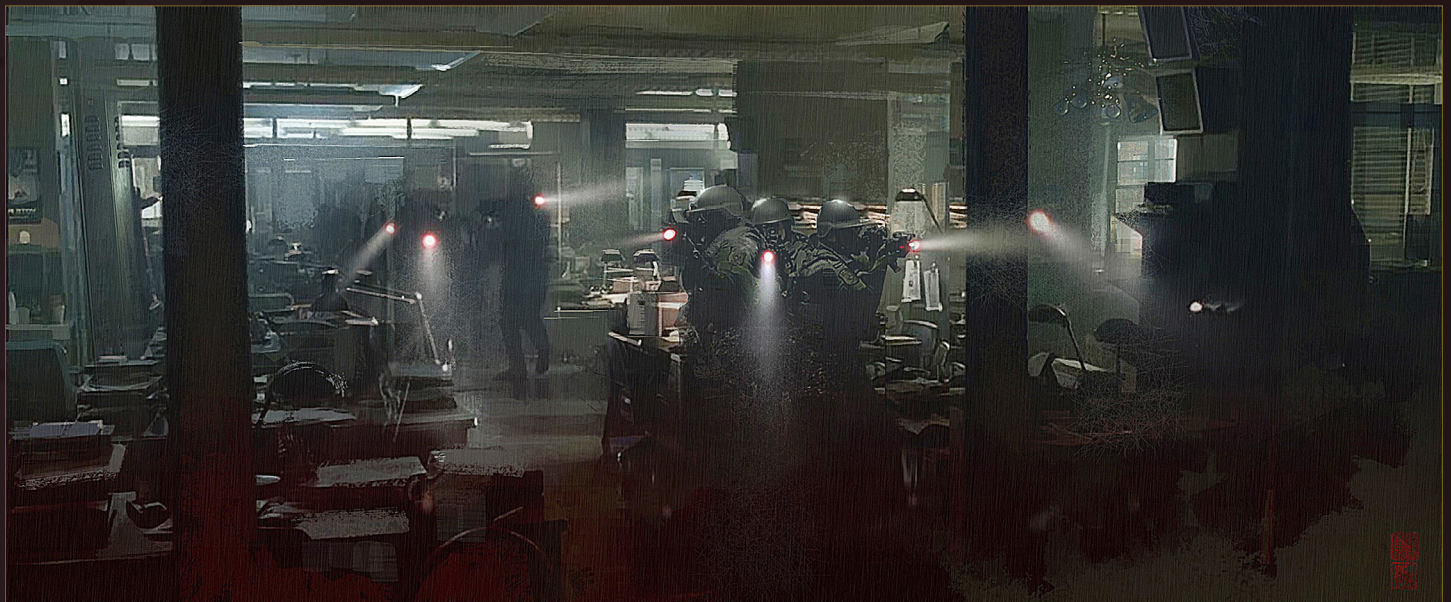
the chance to work with the world-renowned art director and artist Raphael Lacoste on this game, and his input and involvement with the project was a huge inspiration to the whole of the art team.

The core art team also had a very solid pipeline and experience with the previous *Assassin's Creed* titles, so they were constantly pushing the technical limits for an impressive visual result. Being part of such a team, I was able to fully concentrate on the artwork and bring fresh visual ideas without struggling with the technical aspects. It was truly motivating to see how my concept artworks were implemented into the 3D virtual space.

**Do you have any advice for anyone wanting to start a career in the industry?**

For the young artists or students who want to start their career in the concept art field, my advice is to learn the art foundations really well, such as color theory, anatomy, drawing from observation, and perspective. They are important for both traditional and digital work. Digital tools are great, but they won't make any magic happen just by themselves, so it's important to have a solid understanding of those art fundamentals.

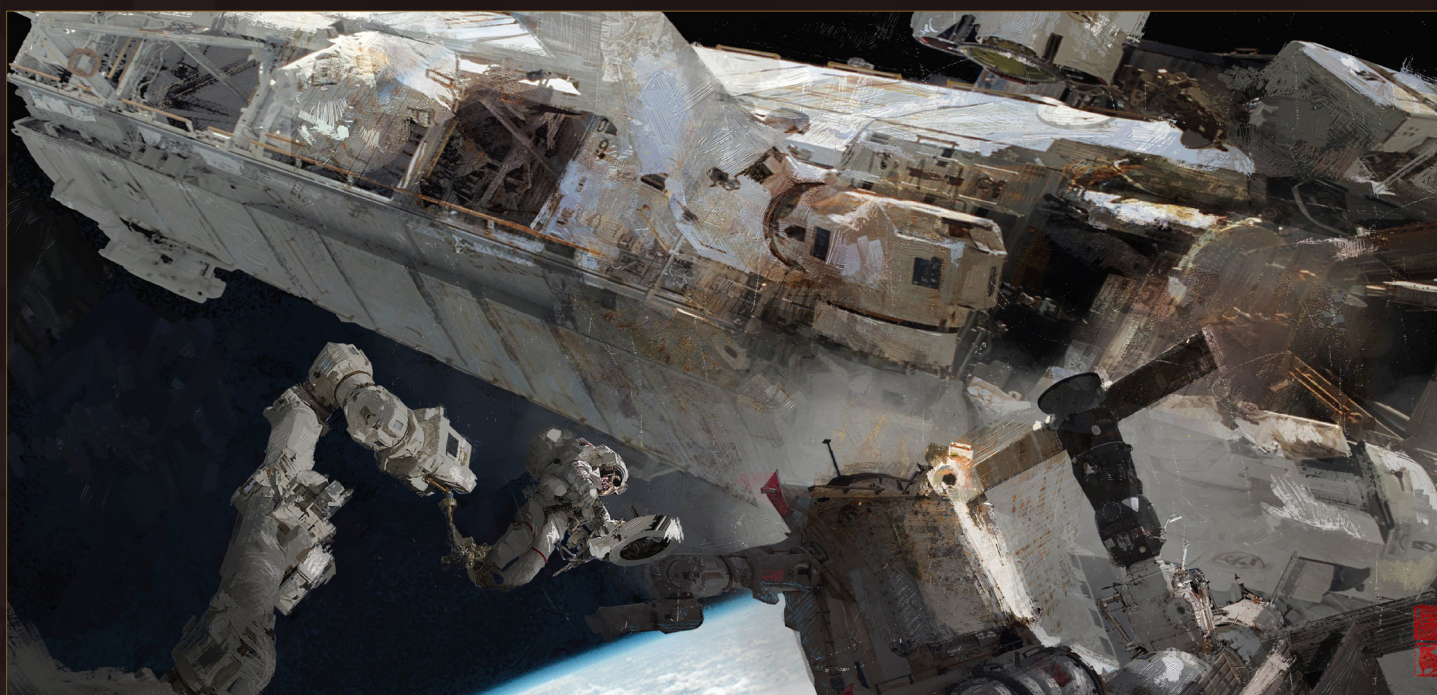
It would also be helpful to attend different conferences related to the entertainment industry, as they allow you to make connections











with the professionals. You will be surprised how these conferences can offer you some valuable opportunities to step into the industry.

**Could you tell us about any projects you are working on at the moment or what you have coming up in the future?**

I can't really say much about my current project at Ubisoft because of the confidentiality policy, but *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* is coming out by the end of this year and I can't wait to share some of my concept artwork with you.

Also, I have joined VFX Workshops to put together a speed painting video tutorial; I have really worked hard on this one. I didn't just make a detailed explanation and demonstration about my painting techniques, but I have also shown what a concept artist's daily job routine looks like.

For anyone who is interested, you can go to the VFX Workshops website for a quick preview of the video: <http://vfxworkshops.com/instructor-workshops/donglu-yu/>

Besides the full-time job, I have recently started my own design studio, Pixel Belle, with my husband Jack Zhang, who is also a senior artist

**"I think it is important to focus on what you want to draw in your portfolio, so the recruiters and the art directors can quickly see your strength."**

in the game industry. We have been actively bringing innovative visual solutions and ideas for iPhone/iPad games, card games, book illustrations, and CG movie concepts, just to name few!

**When you aren't working on digital art and concepts, how do you enjoy spending your time?**

As a mother of two kids, I enjoy spending the rest of the time with my family. Nice walks near the river, a picnic in the park or a tour in the museum; these are the moments that I extremely appreciate in my free time.

By the way, I think that my older daughter got the artistic genes from me and my husband. She is only two and half, and she is already addicted to my Cintiq tablet and knows how to pick colors in Photoshop!

I also enjoy cooking; preparing a tasty and healthy meal for the family is a true pleasure for me even though I don't have the luxury of being able to do it every day after work.

**Working for a big company such as Ubisoft is a dream for a lot of emerging artists. Could you give any advice on tailoring portfolios and what these companies are looking for?**

I think it is important to focus on what you want to draw in your portfolio, so the recruiters and the art directors can quickly see your strength. You can focus on environments, characters, vehicles or props. Build 80% of your portfolio around only one subject and 20% around others, just to hint that you are versatile.

It is also helpful to study the game titles that specific companies produce to choose the theme of your artworks. If you want to do environments for *Far Cry*, make sure your concepts are colorful with lot of open views and vegetation. If you want to do a character for *Assassin's Creed*, make sure that you do characters based on the history and the culture. If you want to do props for *Splinter Cell*, make sure your portfolio is full of modern weapon design and vehicles, etc.





**What can you tell us about your experiences at Ubisoft?**

Ubisoft is a company which has a wide variety of game titles; it is fun for the concept artists to jump from one game to another in order to embrace diverse designs in different time periods such as historical, modern or sci-fi. Ubisoft Montreal has a long history, so we can find a lot of senior and worldwide-known artists in the company. It's been a blast to know those people in the productions and witness their professionalism and talent in their own particular field of expertise.

Within the production, concept artists are well respected because of their strong involvement in crystalizing and implementing the art director's vision. I really enjoy the daily interaction with the art team, so we can bring innovative and fresh visuals into the games with the support of future next-gen technologies.

**Is it difficult to design in a way that both appeals to customers, while meeting your own taste and expectations?**

I think it is always the hardest thing in both freelance and full-time production work. I find that the best solution is to constantly communicate your thoughts and ideas behind the designs to the clients, so they are always reassured that all of their essential design needs are being fulfilled.







Once they are reassured, you can squeeze your personal touch into the artwork. For example, if you want to make a more speed painting piece of concept art, with bold brushstrokes, and the art director wants a more realistic one it's not because there is a personal preference for the style, it is more because the modelers would understand how an object is constructed much better with a realistic and detailed painting. Once you understand the reason behind the requirement, you can reassure the art director by saying that you will provide photo references for your concept; he would then probably let you go with a more moody concept instead of a photo-real one.

**How do you go about choosing the colors in your work and what brushes do you use? Are there certain ones you find yourself using the most?**

The choice of colors simply goes with the light direction that I take. I usually start with less saturated colors in my painting, without too

much contrast. So I will have the room to play with the saturation just on the right spots where the light punches.

For beginners, I suggest that they pick colors directly from existing photos to understand the intimate relation between the colors and the lighting. Sometimes when you pick a blue tone in the shadow and check that tone in the Color Picker window, you will notice that the tone is actually a mid-gray value. The lighting condition around a specific color heavily influences how your eyes and brain perceive that color.

I am not the kind who gets too fancy with the brushes in my daily work. The brushes that I use the most are the simplest ones, such as the round airbrush, charcoal, precise round brush and a few generic texture brushes. They are very effective and quick to use to build up the base of my painting. Sometimes I do create specific brushes for certain elements in different

contexts, such as vegetation brushes, building structure brushes, and mechanical detail brushes, etc.

**Thanks for taking the time to chat with us today!**

**Donglu Yu**

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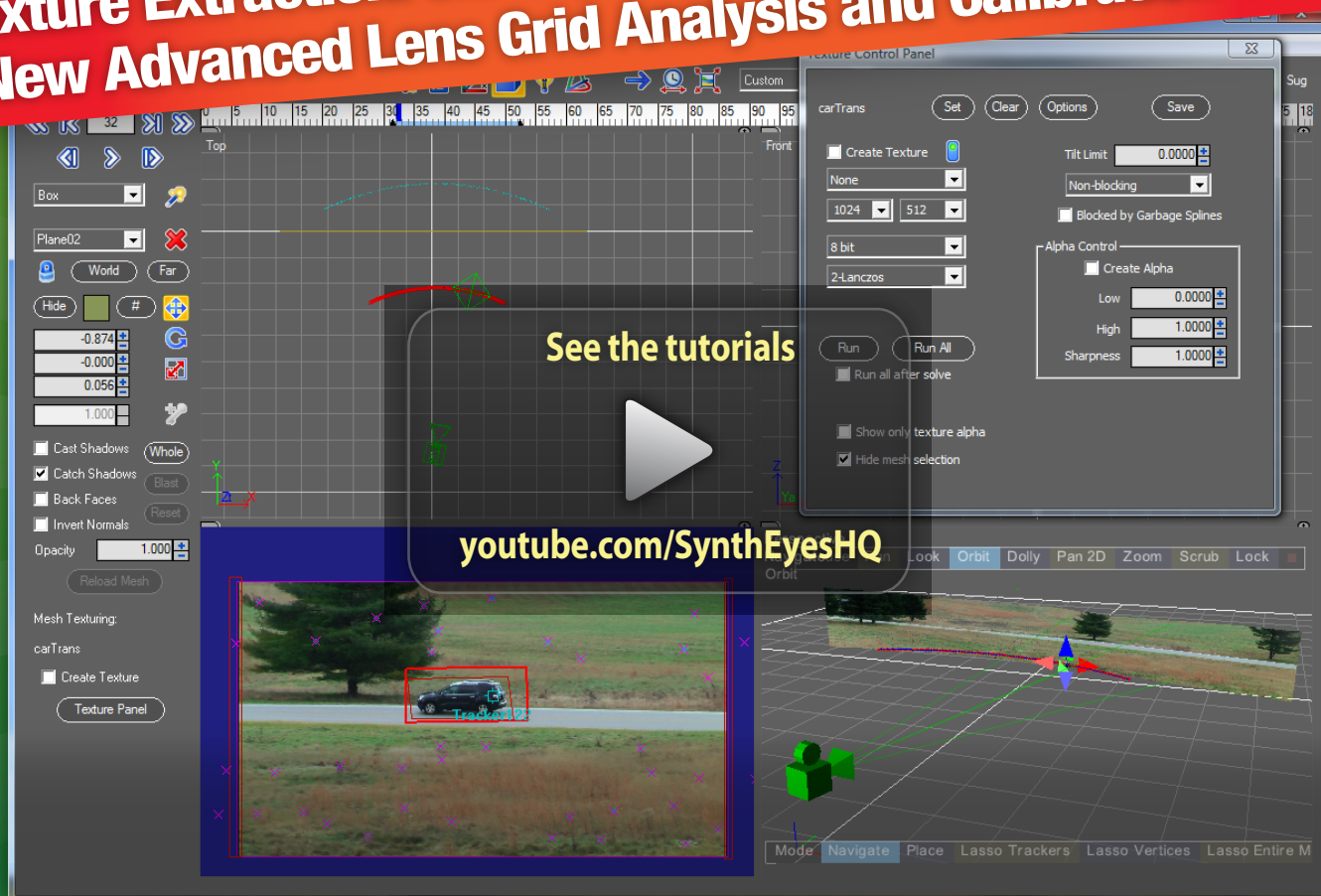




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"I try to change medium every once in a while, even when staying with the same topic"

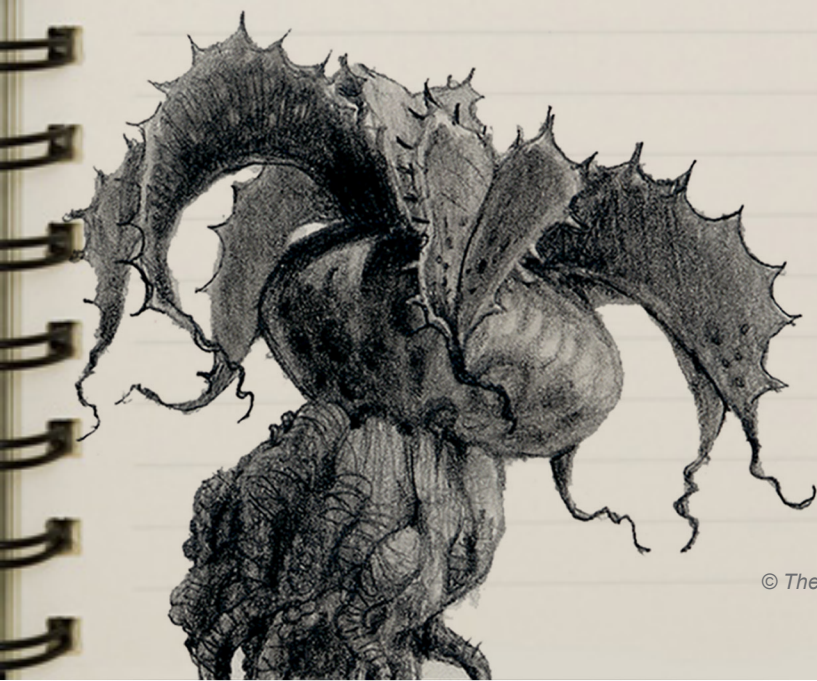
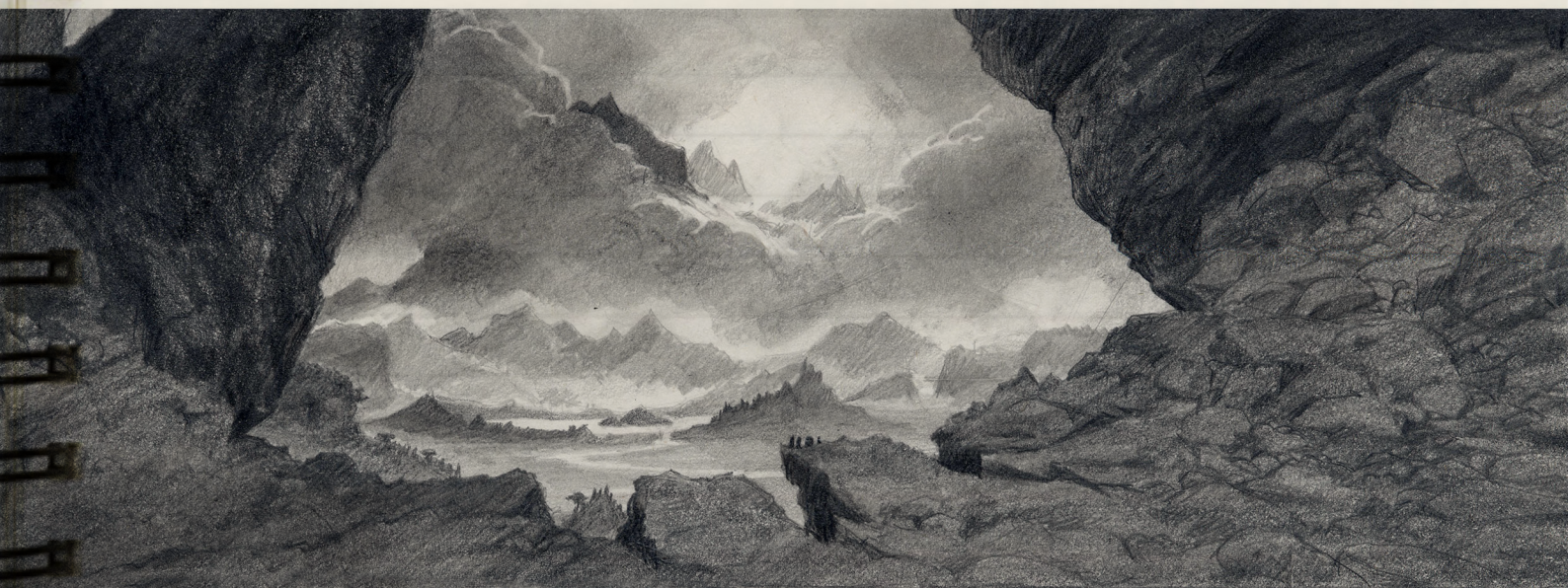
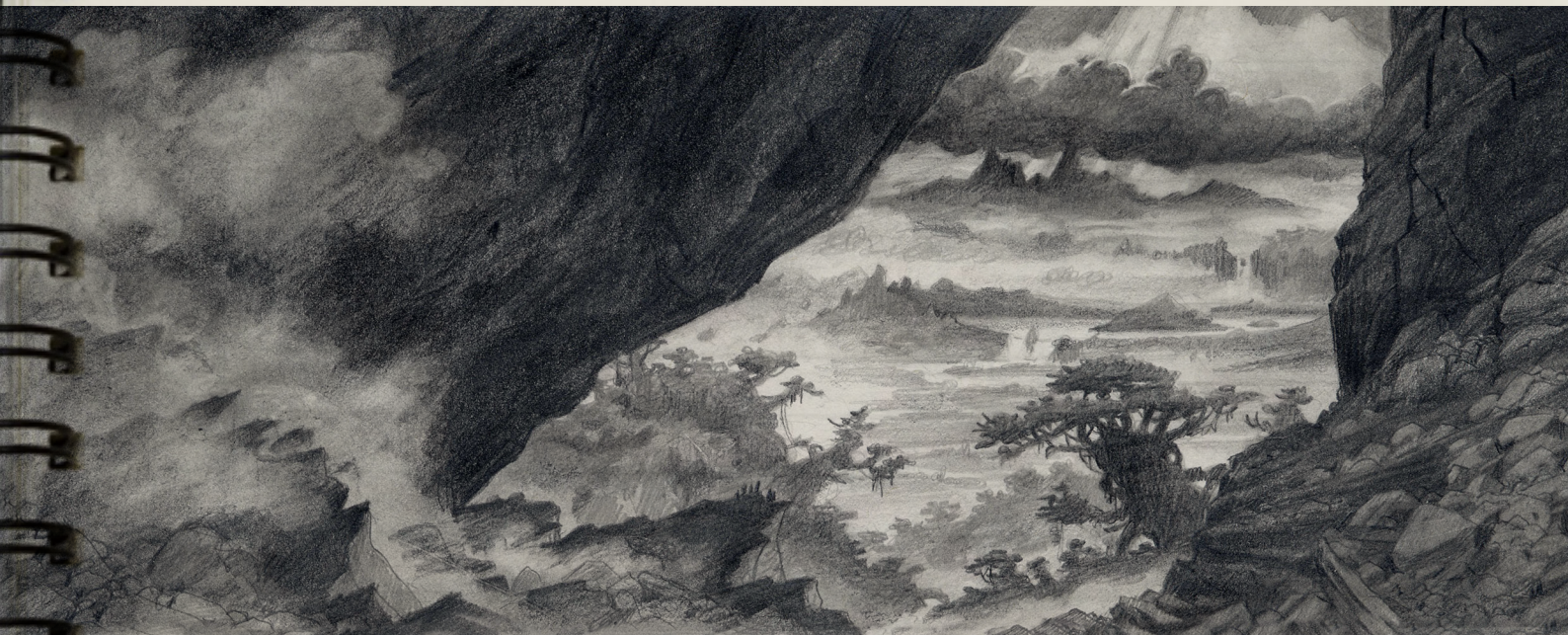


# SKETCHBOOK

## Of Nicolas Weis

Nicolas Weis, a dynamic visual development artist at DreamWorks Animation, who has recently worked on *The Croods*, shares his doodles and scribbles with us in this month's sketchbook.

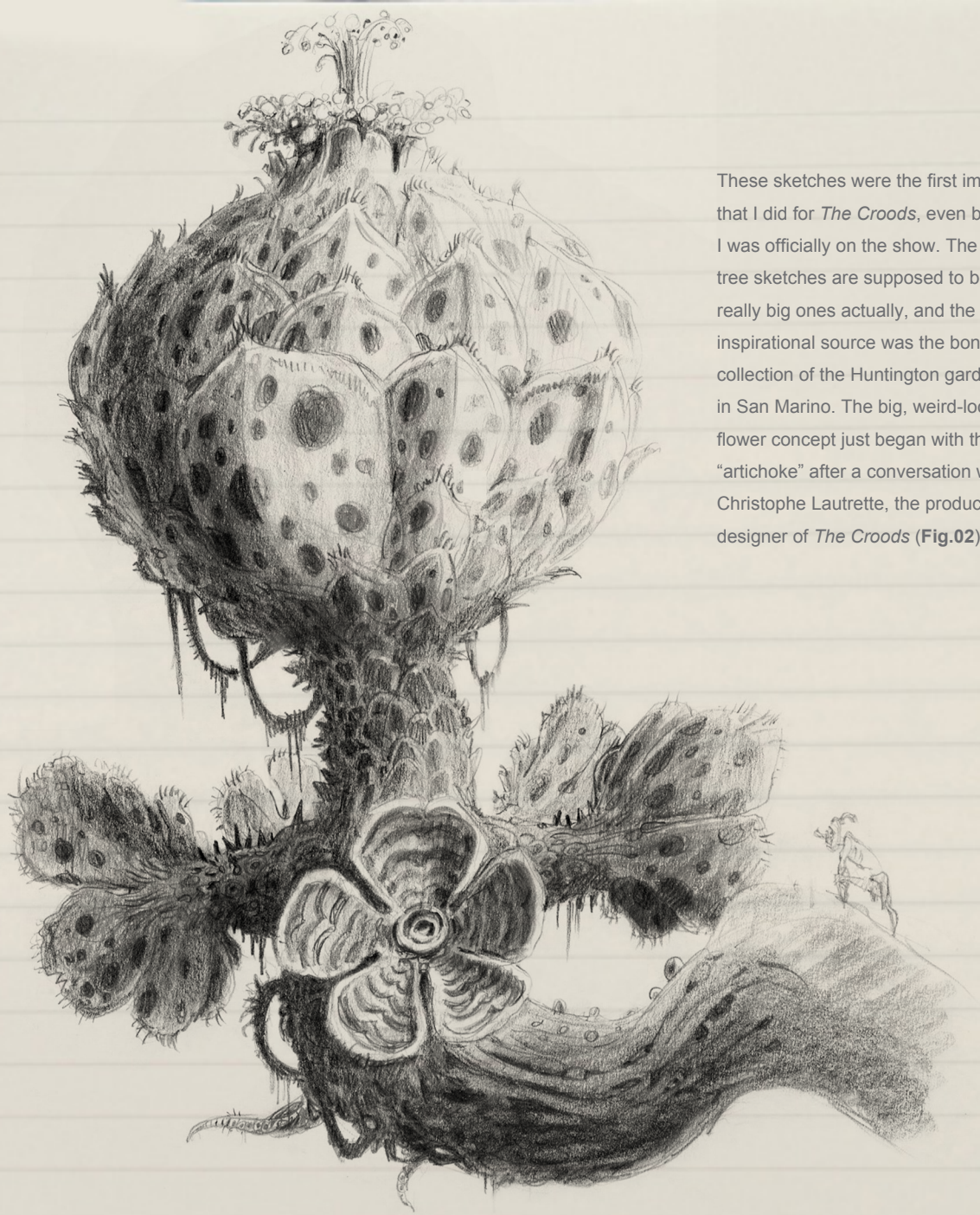




### Sketchbook of Nicolas Weis

These sketches are a good example of what I draw on a daily basis while working in an animation studio, from a single, small and sun-burnt plant, to a wide view of a huge landscape. Both were drawn with the same pencils and I had fun on both assignments (**Fig.01**).

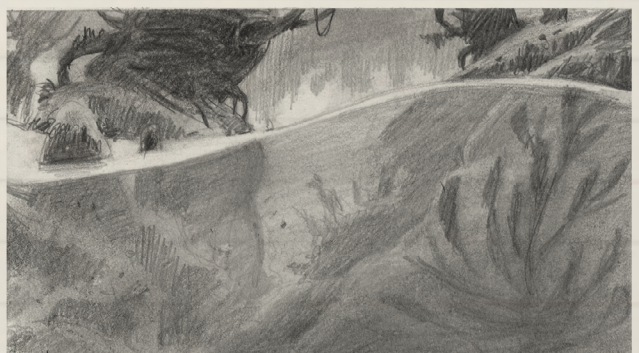
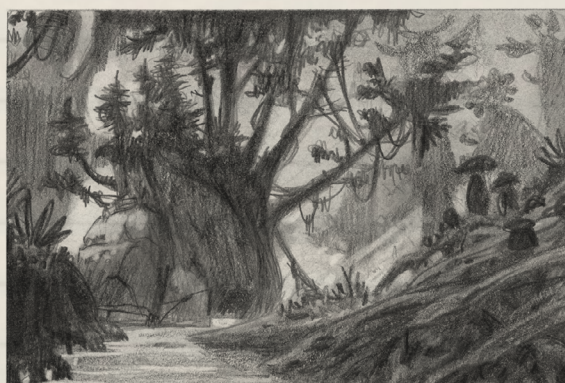
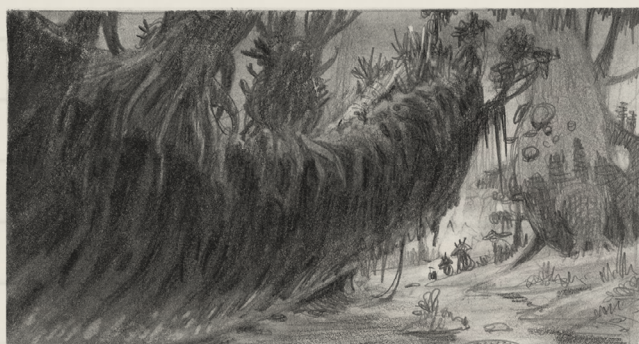




These sketches were the first images that I did for *The Croods*, even before I was officially on the show. The small tree sketches are supposed to be really big ones actually, and the main inspirational source was the bonsai collection of the Huntington garden in San Marino. The big, weird-looking flower concept just began with the word “artichoke” after a conversation with Christophe Lautrette, the production designer of *The Croods* (Fig.02).







These layout sketches were supposed to help figure out the different camera angles we could use for the "new world" area (they are about four inches long). I drew them next to each other in my sketchbook to be sure that they were not exploring similar ideas.

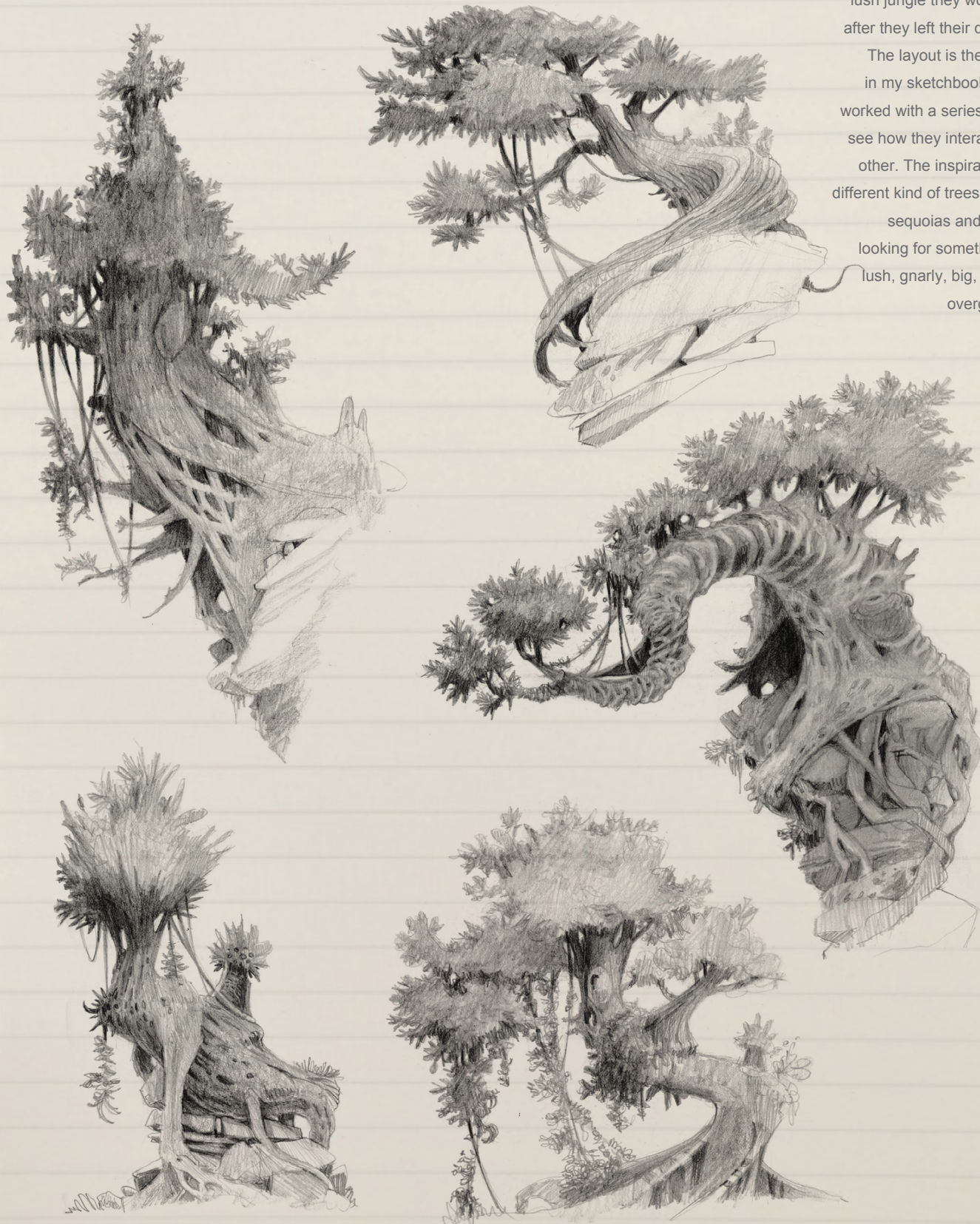
The tree on the lower right area was designed for the first act of the movie, a deserted, dry and dangerous region. I decided to pose it like an animal to accentuate its ominous aspect (Fig.03).





These trees were the first exploration for the kind of vegetation *The Croods* would discover in the lush jungle they would go through after they left their destroyed cave.

The layout is the original I have in my sketchbook; once again, I worked with a series of drawings to see how they interacted with each other. The inspiration came from different kind of trees: ficus, banyan, sequoias and bonsais. I was looking for something whimsical, lush, gnarly, big, precarious and overgrown (Fig.04).

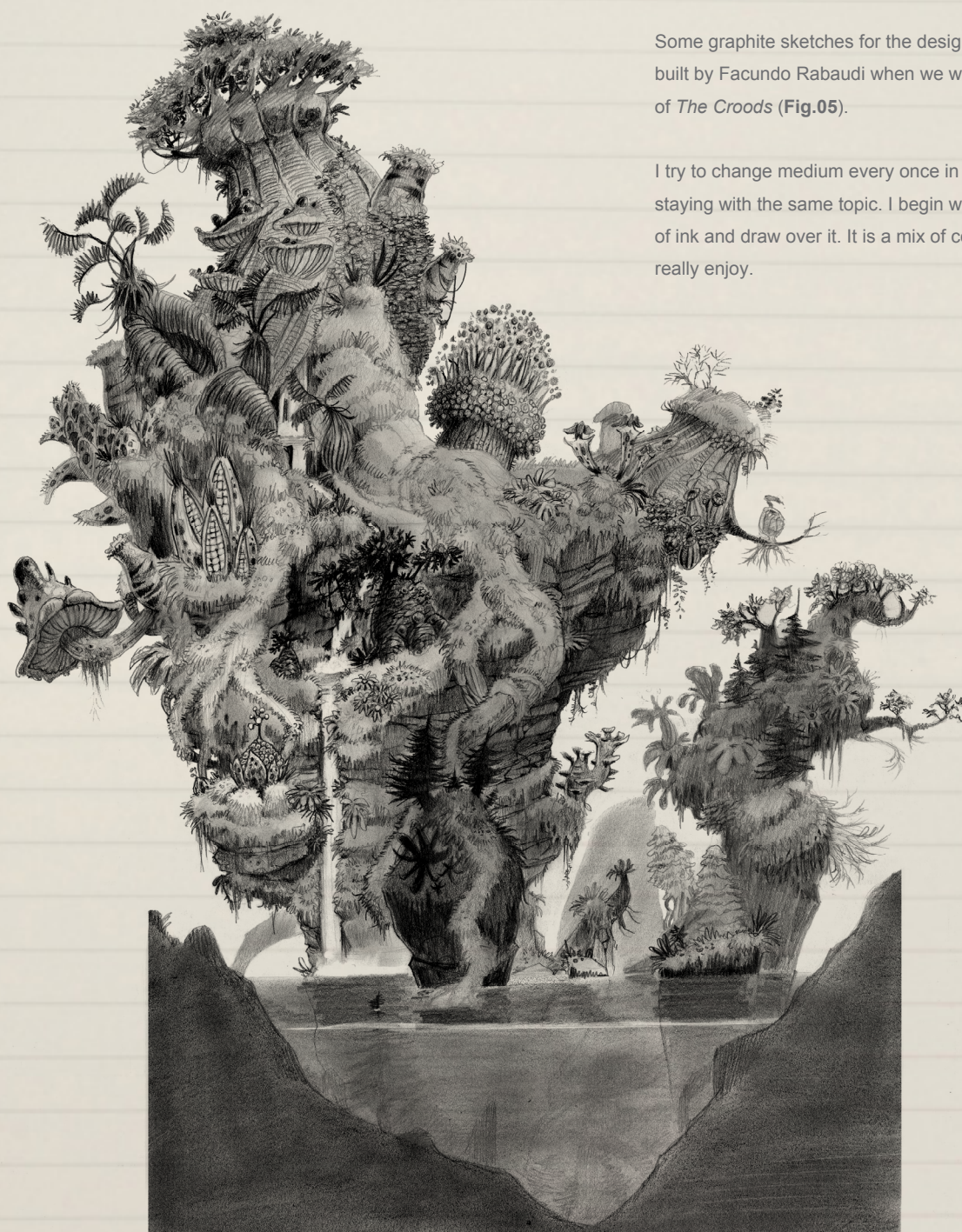


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Some graphite sketches for the design of a physical model built by Facundo Rabaudi when we were looking for the style of *The Croods* (Fig.05).

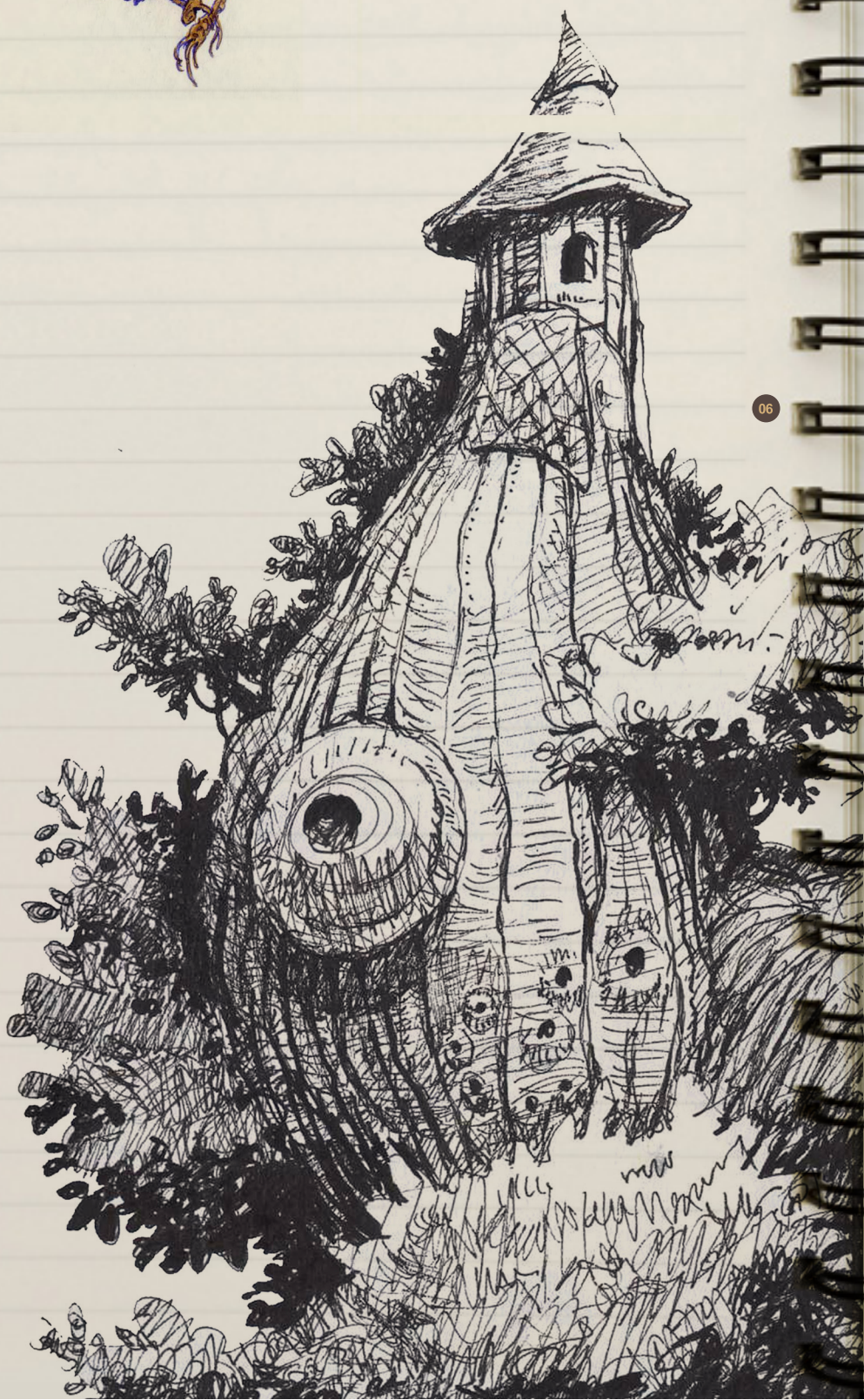
I try to change medium every once in a while, even when staying with the same topic. I begin with a scribble or a splash of ink and draw over it. It is a mix of control and intuition that I really enjoy.





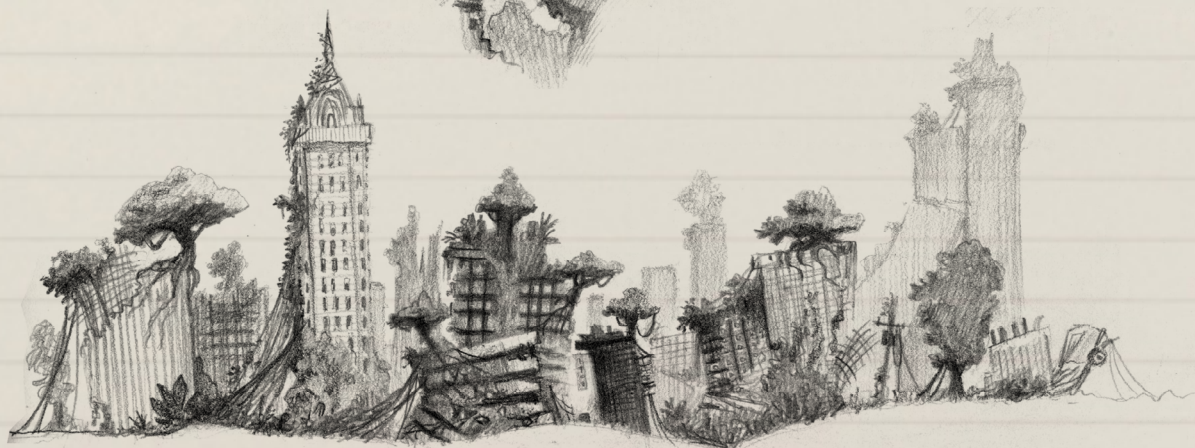
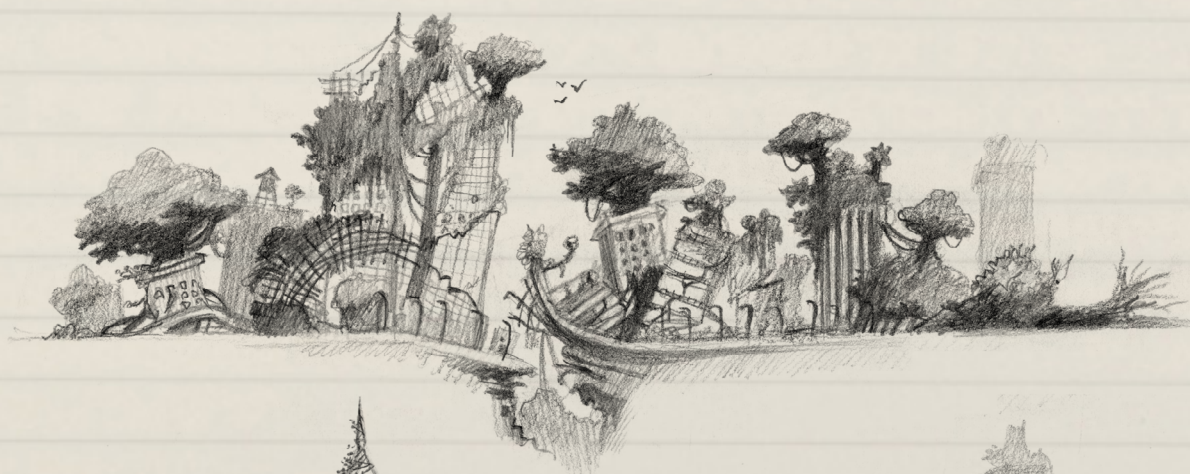


This would be good advice to give to anyone who wonders what to draw: when you don't know what to do, do something, anything! Unplug your brain and make a statement, however minimal or abstract it may be. Then explore the potential of this shape and push it as far as you can (Fig.06).

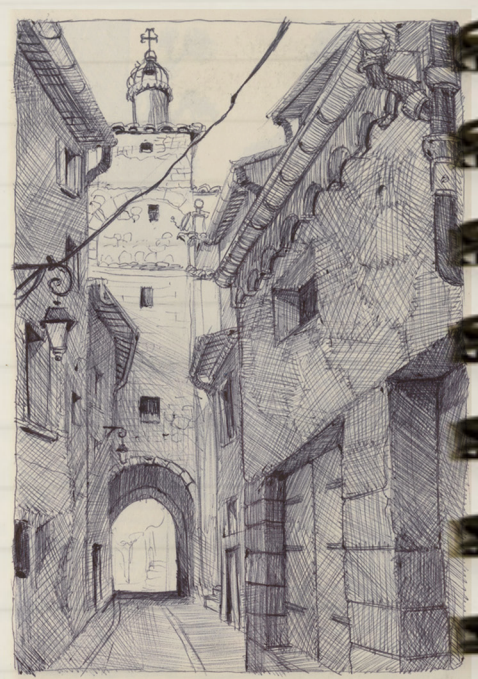
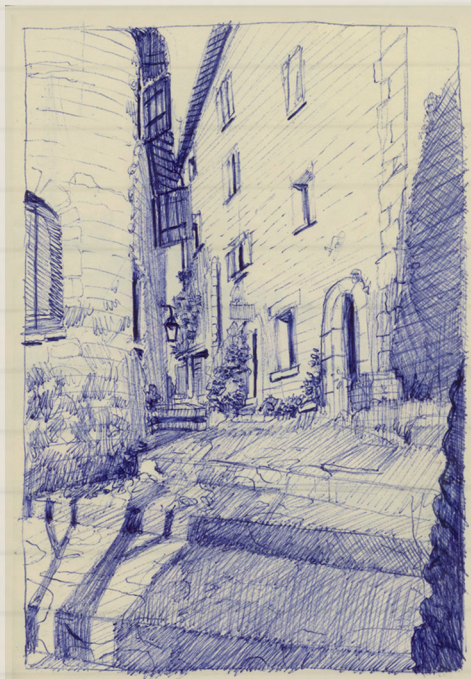




These graphite sketches were made for an old project I had, a sci-fi version of Little Red Riding Hood, set up on an abandoned, overgrown Earth (Fig.07).







**Fig.08** was drawn in the south of France, in the convoluted and cool streets of Bargème, Castelane and Roquebrune Cap-Martin, with the sun over my head. This is the unique taste of vacation.







**Fig.09** is a result of a fine night sketching with friends. I did the abstract splashes of watercolor, then looked at them as if they were clouds, trying to figure out if they were trains, flowers or birthday cakes. It turned out they looked like demons.





These sketches are a mix of copies from books and internet references, and drawings on location nearby one of the D-day beaches in Normandy. After you spend more than 20 minutes drawing tanks or any similar death machine you begin to feel bad about how exciting they are to draw. If you don't, you probably have more serious problems than perspective or the weight of your line (Fig.10).



I have been recently drawing a lot with ballpoint pens and I really enjoy it. Not fancy ones; the kind you find on any desk. The scope of their potential is really wide and it seems like every one of them has a special feel. Hence I have been gathering and mentally labeling every one I used (Fig.11).





Life drawing is where I come from as far as technique goes. A human body will teach you anything you need to know about perspective, shape, volume, light, shadows and composition (Fig.12).







Here is another example of the abstract splash technique. This time I used walnut ink and a few drops of watercolor that I dropped when it was still wet. I then used a quill for the line drawing and eventually added some more watercolors here and there (Fig.13).

It is a very fun and forgiving technique. You can work the first abstract shape a lot as long as it is still wet, and then use some water to partially erase some of the lines done with the walnut ink. It is a little bit like chasing imaginary animals while gazing at the clouds.







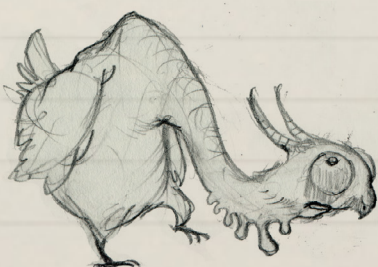
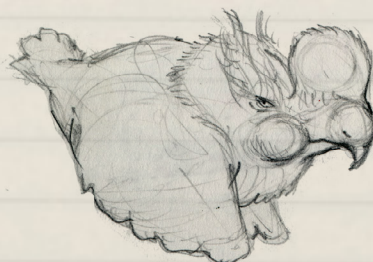
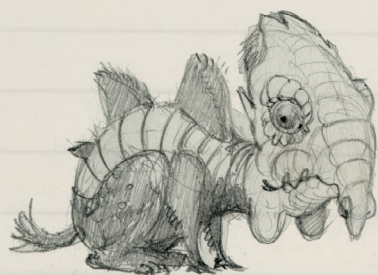
14



15

I have been drawing a lot of dragons recently, trying to incorporate non-reptilian shapes and characteristics. I drew all of them on the Strathmore artist trading cards. Then I used watercolor and colored pencils. Once again, I tried to come up with a variety of shapes, poses and then colors. The small size of the support forced me to go as straight to the point as I could and to focus on the dynamic of the overall pose and on the cuteness (Fig.14 – 15).





All these weird little creatures began as a scribble that I did without looking at the paper. Then it was just a matter of picking the line(s) that inspired me and lead me to the final drawing (Fig.16).

16

Nicolas Weis

Web: <http://www.nicolasweis.com/>

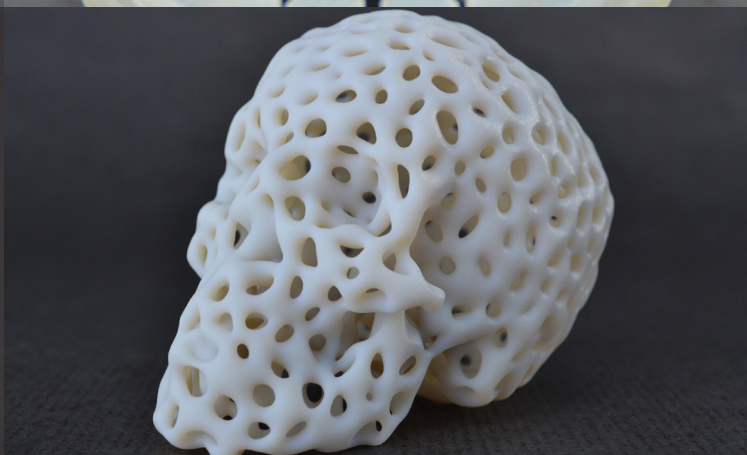
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# GALLERY

This month we feature: Jose Cabrera | Markus Lovadina | Jason Seiler | Edvige Faini | Aekkarat Sumutchaya  
Luis Gama | Mohammad Keivan Marz | Anthony Eftekhari | Alexey Egorov | Ludwin Schouten





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## Biological – Hereditary Memories of Other Worlds and Universes

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Happy  
holidays







Sometimes Even Reindeer Need a Break

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30 with Parents

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Nenil Playing with his Ride!

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The Battle of Alesia

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# HEROES AND VILLAINS

Shapes, color and theory are an important part of character design. You can create a feeling of good or evil in visual design by changing the combinations that you use. In this tutorial series each artist has been presented with a games-like brief describing a hero or villain, and their challenge is to use this brief to design a character while conveying the elements that make them recognizable.



## Chapter 02 – Moonshine

Software Used: Photoshop

### Introduction

Character design is easily my biggest painting passion. What can I say? I'm in love with painting people! I always find painting characters fun, but painting a villain? It's the perfect opportunity for having that little bit of extra fun! The starting point for my villain, Moonshine, is a brief description:

*"This character carries a tank or cylinder on his back, attached to a hose that fires flammable liquid similar to a flamethrower. His appearance is shabby and he wears a large, overhanging hat that helps obscure his face."*

Exploration is an important part of any character creation – a little experimentation will give you a nice selection to choose from – but I have to admit that I usually picture the sort of character I'm aiming for instantly.

After reading the description of Moonshine I already know what I want to go for: something leaning on the side of stylized rather than realistic, purely because it's going to be a hell of a lot of fun! Perhaps it's harking back to my Disney years, but I do love a good villain. With a little stylization I can exaggerate his features and throw in some bright pops of color, both of which are appealing to the idea I have stewing in my head.

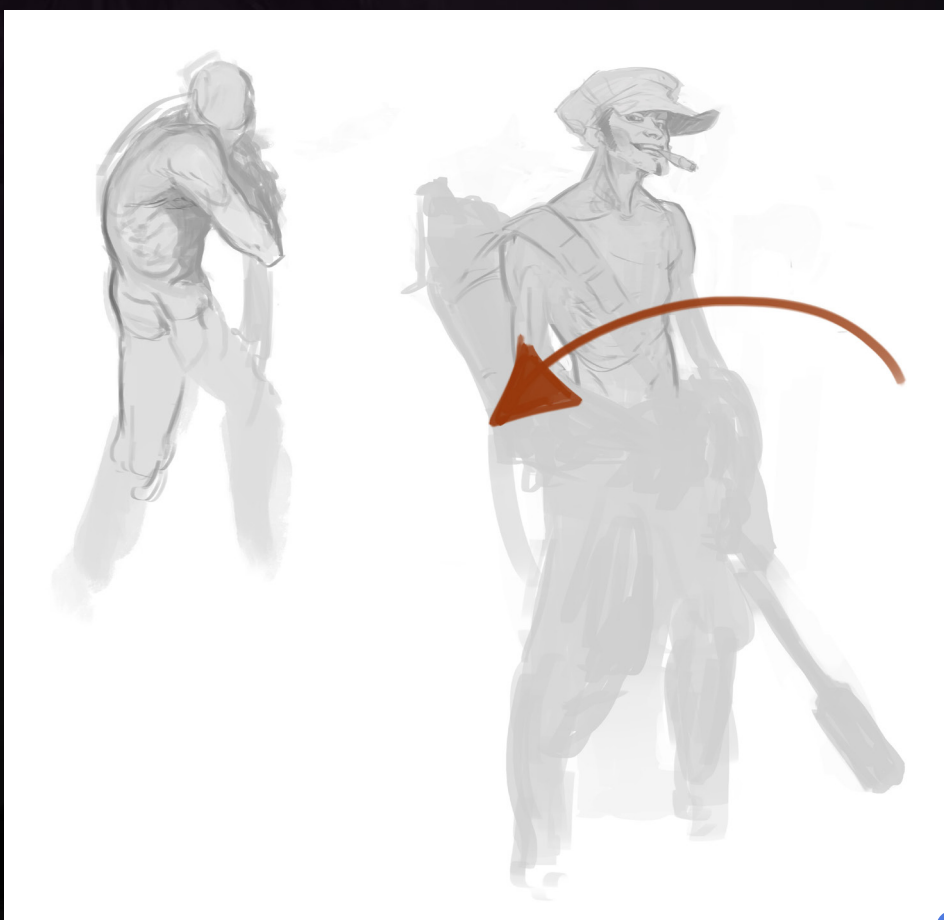
### Step 1: Let's Get Started

To start with I'm blocking in some rough silhouettes to try and find the pose and shape of the character. I want to get this part nailed first so that I'm completely happy with the pose before I start playing around with any of the character's features.

I don't have a specific pose I'm aiming for, but I'm trying to keep in mind that this is intended to be a character design rather than purely an illustration. This means that I want to make sure you can see as much of him as possible, clearly, while avoiding just sticking him in a boring T pose (**Fig.01**).

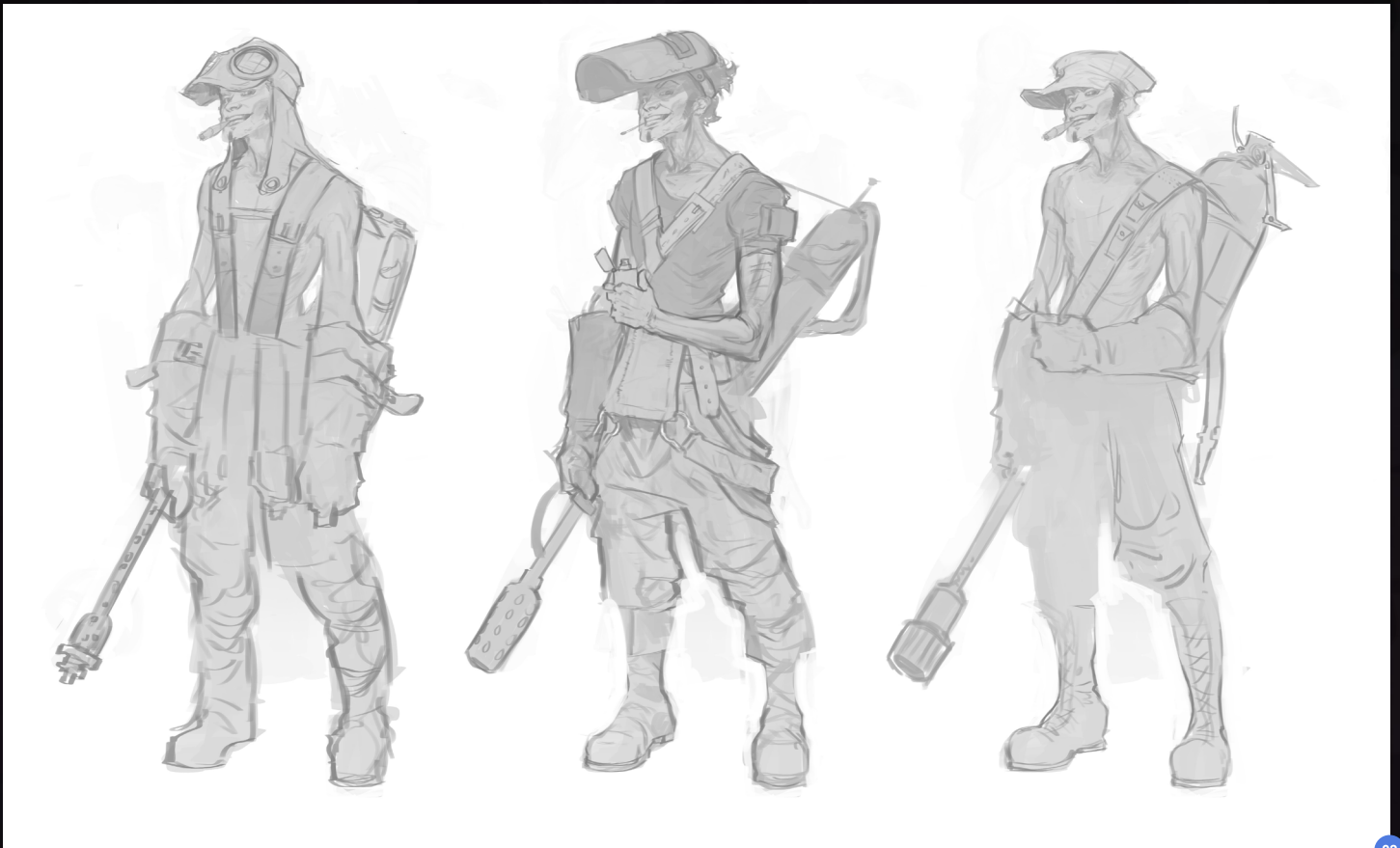


01



02





03

### Step 2: Don't Forget to Flip!

I do it so much it seems a given really, but don't forget to flip your image! Flipping is a great way to gain a new perspective on a painting. It really helps when noticing mistakes; they usually stick out like a sore thumb once flipped! Try and do



04

this every hour or so, that way you won't reach the end of a painting and realize it looks terrible flipped the other way (Image > Image Rotation > Flip Canvas Horizontal) (Fig.02).

### Step 3: Experimentation is Key

I haven't quite set my sights on one idea in particular at this point, so I've duplicated Moonshine a couple of times. This means that I can try out some variations and different ideas on his character.

As I mentioned before, exploration is key. Rather than sticking with one idea at the start and then potentially changing different elements of his design throughout the painting, it's much more logical to experiment at the beginning and develop the ideas you like best until you settle on a final design. You can always add in smaller elements as you develop the painting (Fig.03).

### Step 4: Putting the Pieces Together

So here we have a few variations on Moonshine. There are different elements that I like about each of the designs, and I think a mixture of them would work well together. I like

the overall shape of the middle iteration. I think he's got enough contrast within his shape to make him interesting.

I also particularly like the welding visor in place of a hat. I do like large, overhanging hats but I'm bending the rules and going with the visor – I just think that it looks the best out of the options. I really like the fire extinguisher as the flamethrower tank, but I'm going to opt for the second one. I'm thinking ahead and I know I could throw in a vivid pop of color for the flammable liquid – if I go for the clear tube option (Fig.04).

### Step 5: Starting the Color

So now that I've roughly mashed together my favorite elements from the different Moonshine iterations, it's time to start working on the color!

Moonshine himself is on a single layer that's separate from the background. I normally like to keep my layers fairly flat, but for this purpose I'm going to keep the figure separate because it will be handy later on if I decide to throw in any textures over the top. For now, I'm adding



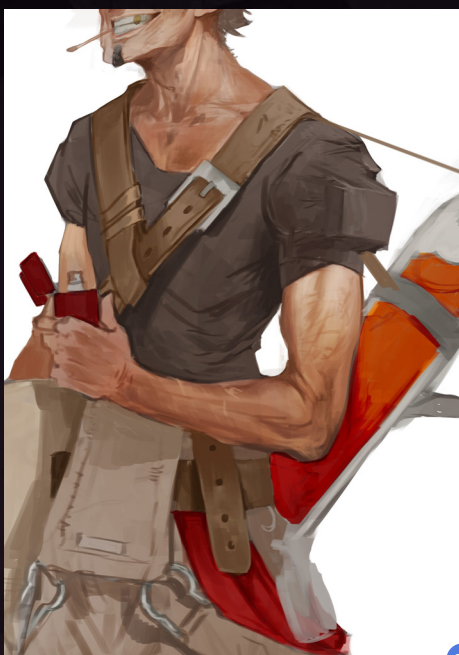


05

in the base colors. I'm doing this by blocking in the sections of color on a layer underneath the character (**Fig.05**).

### Step 6: Keeping it Rough for Now

Now that the base colors are done I flatten the two layers together and get started on adding some basic details. I'm keeping everything pretty rough at this point. I want to build up the general form of the character without getting too detailed at the start.



06

I stick with brushes that have a bit of texture to them; hard-edged, chalky brushes are a winner with me. I think they add a nice bit of texture to a painting; I like to see hints of brushwork. I'm also intentionally keeping things rough as I find that helps with the male form in general. I don't want it to be too smooth (**Fig.06**).

### Step 7: Mixing Different Layers

Now that I'm pretty happy with where the character is going, I spend a bit of time building



07

up the detail on Moonshine's face. I'm still trying to bring out that crazy expression and villainous side. I'm using a mixture of opaque layers and I'm also occasionally adding in an Overlay layer. I tend to use Overlay layers every now and then as they're a great way of warming up the tones in the face (and body, if need be). I'm adding in a little red to the nose and ears (**Fig.07**).

### Step 8: It's all in the Expression

A character's face is a part of a painting that I normally spend a lot of time working on. It's always important to me that the character has a good expression, be it a somber one or, in Moonshine's case, a bit of a crazy one.

I really want to bring out his personality and I imagine him to be a little bit deranged; he's a villain after all! So I'm giving him a sadistic grin, along with crazy, wide eyes and furrowed caterpillar eyebrows. Expressions can be so much fun, so make sure you play around with them (**Fig.08**)!

### Step 9: Texture, Texture, Texture

I like to add in textures throughout the painting process. I think they work better by layering them up and painting them back into the character, rather than just slapping them on at the end. I've picked a few different grungy textures and I'm putting them over the top of Moonshine. Make sure to right-click that layer



08

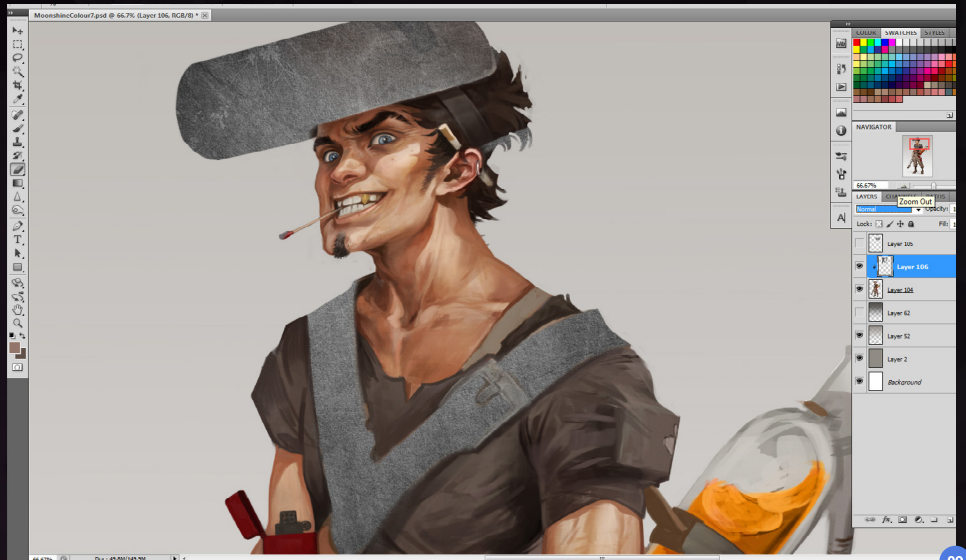


and select Create Clipping Mask. This way you don't have to worry about erasing the edges around the character. Then just drop the opacity, erase sections you don't need and play around with the layer modes (Fig.09)!

### Step 10: Think About his Character

It seems obvious really, but if you're designing a character, then think about their personality throughout the painting. You'll find yourself having light bulb moments and thinking of elements you can add to really bring out their character.

Moonshine should be a bit of a scruff, so I'm gradually adding some dirt and grunge to his clothes; and I'm making sure they're all pretty worn and frayed. Then I'm just adding in some fun little details: an outdoorsy-type tan line and an auto shop-style name badge. They might suggest what he gets up to outside of his villain duties (Fig.10).



### Step 11: Painting the Fabric

I don't have to worry too much about painting Moonshine's t-shirt in much detail; it's pretty form-fitting and a few strokes to suggest some creases will suffice. As for his trousers though, they're pretty baggy and heavy by the looks of

them, so they create a lot of folds and require some more detail.

With fabric I always try and keep in mind the weight of it and imagine how it folds over itself. You can stylize and simplify it to a certain





degree, but it helps to build up a little visual library of how it should look so references are a great resource (Fig.11).

## Step 12: A Little More Texture

Now that I've painted up the folds of Moonshine's trousers they're looking a little too neat and I really want to emphasize his grubby side. So I'm throwing on another texture! I'm putting it on a layer above Moonshine and setting it to Clipping Mask.

Again, you won't have to worry about erasing the parts you don't need. Drop the opacity a little and even add in another layer if you think it needs it and voila, his trousers are messy again (Fig.12). All of my textures are coming from [cgtextures.com](http://cgtextures.com) – a great free library, just make sure you're using textures you're allowed to use.

## Step 13: Adding Some Bounce Light

I nearly always like to add in a secondary light source when I paint characters; you can have a lot of fun and build up form with other light sources, and bounce light. I kind of think that



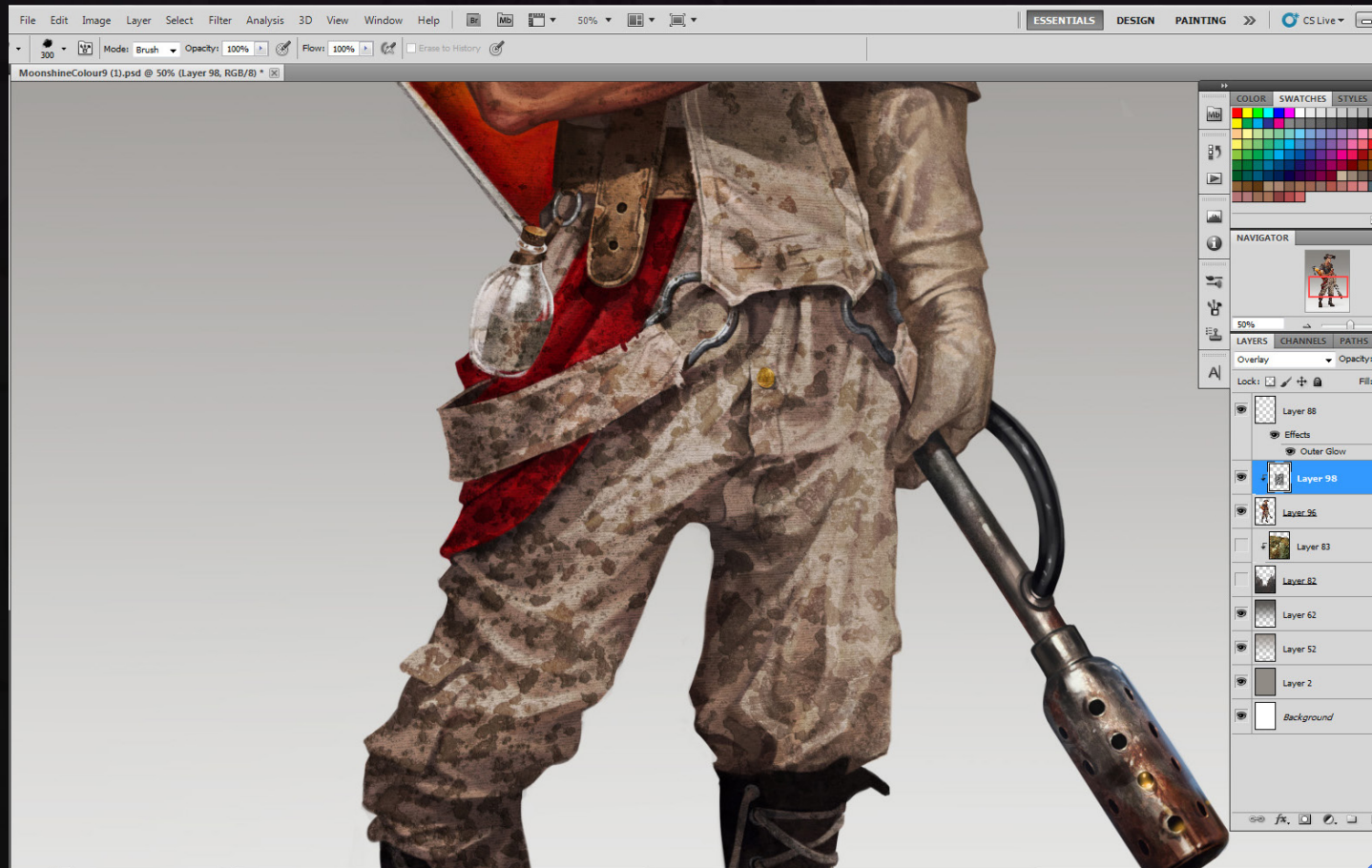
Moonshine doesn't need an entire second source though, so I'm adding a couple of smaller bounce lights.

I've made the tank of fluid a really bright color and it looks a little like it's glowing, so I'm just

adding a little bounce on his arm and that side of the body where the light would hit (Fig.13).

## Step 14: Last Minute Texture

So we're pretty much at the end of the painting and the illustrator in me can't bear to leave poor







13

Moonshine with such a plain background, so I'm throwing in some last minute texture along with a subtle pop of color.

This is where keeping Moonshine on his own layer will come in handy; it means I can tweak the background without disturbing the character. I'm splashing on a bright orange with a nice raggedy textured brush, and then throwing a texture over the top of that on a Clipping Mask layer. A little tweaking of the opacity to tone it down slightly and voila (**Fig.14**)!

### Step 15. The Final Touches

By now I'm pretty happy with the overall character. I'm just adding in a few final touches, which, to be honest, normally take the longest amount of time!

For me this is just a case of slowly working my way around the painting and working up those details, like belt buckles and the fun little extras like the temperature gauge on his tank. And of course, I've given him a little flask of booze;

naturally it's moonshine. I love detailing so it's a lot of fun, and that's just about it (**Fig.15**).

I hope the tutorial was helpful and that you enjoy working on your own villains!

**Charlie Bowater**

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14







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# FANTASY WORLDS

Fictional universes are often used in games and films, with fantasy being a popular theme! They are made up of many different features such as characters, environments and vehicles, and it is important that all these elements work together to create a believable environment and society to engage the audience. In this series our artist will take a comprehensive look at creating a fantasy world from a concept perspective, and investigate the processes and techniques that can be used to create all the major features of a game or film.



## Chapter 01 – Characters

Software Used: Photoshop

My “new world” will cover the theme of medieval European fantasy, which famous works like *The Lord of the Rings*, *Guild Wars* and *World of Warcraft* are also based on. The reason I've chosen this is that it's one of the most popular themes used in modern digital art and therefore all concept artists should either encounter it or use it at some point in their work.

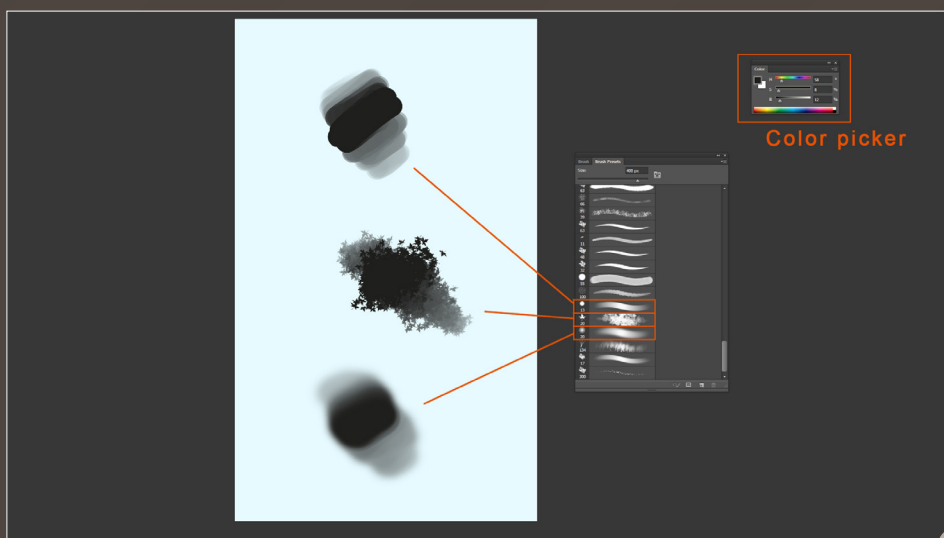
### The Concept

The first step is just thinking about the character in your head. I first think about the main characteristics of my figure and decide to create a female elf assassin.

I've chosen this primarily because drawing female characters is more interesting to me. The elf is a famous and typical race within the fantasy realm and assassins wear light armor, which gives me the opportunity to practice a range of materials.

Before we start, I will briefly show you how I set up my Photoshop work space. This is just one sample reference, so you don't have to follow exactly what I do. You have got your own working style, so set it up as you like!

As you can see in **Fig.01**, my software is Photoshop CS6. From the screenshot you can see three types of brushes and a floating Color



01

Picker with HSB sliders. I like using the HSB sliders as you can set the color with H, adjust the brightness with B and adjust the chroma with S. It's a little tricky when adjusting values on a small tap area, but it can be handy when you get used to it.

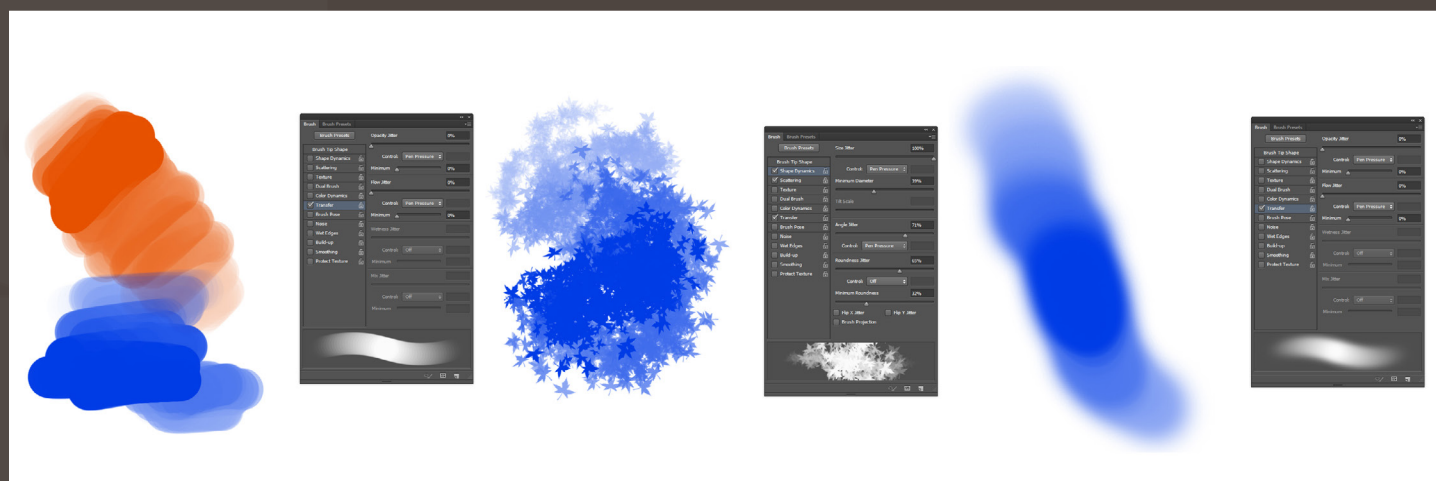
There are many convenient plug-ins out there, but I'm an old fashioned artist using only default functions in Photoshop and I just customize them to fit my own preference (**Fig.02**). I click on Transfer and change the pressure option to Pen Pressure for those three brushes. For the leaf brush, I check Shape Dynamics and Scattering, and allocate appropriate values.

Aside from that, there's no special setting aside from assigning a few hotkeys, expanding History States from Preferences and un-checking the Use Graphics Processor box.

The reason why I suggest this simple and plain setting is because I want you to focus on improving your basic skills rather than getting techniques from the actual tools. There are many different settings and various external plug-ins, but as an experienced artist, I suggest that you concentrate on improving basic skills first. Basics are always first, learning techniques are secondary.

Now our workstation is set, let's begin the concept art!

First of all, refer back to your initial character idea. You don't have to iron out all the details at this stage, even in your head – all you really need in order to get started is a basic outline that you've taken from your imagination. The details are bound to change as soon as you progress anyway!



02





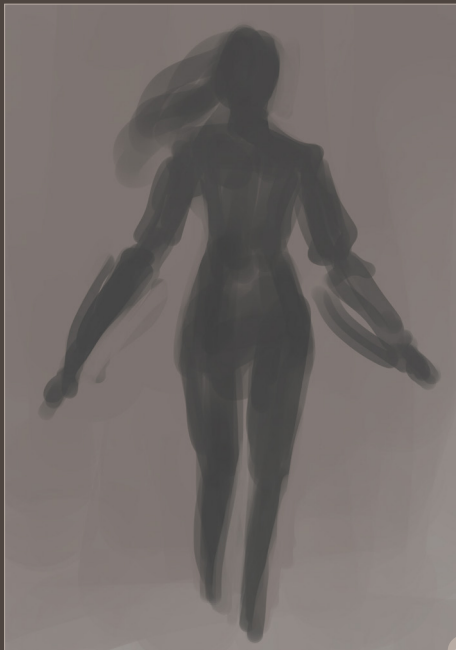
03

First, paint the whole canvas with a single color (**Fig.03**). This will emphasize your artwork just like a decoration. Of course, this is my style in drawing concept art. You don't have to follow exactly what I show; please indulge your own creative impulses!

My canvas size is 6000 x 8000 pixels and the resolution is 300 dpi. It's a huge canvas, but by having this size, I will be able to draw in great detail and so fit my outcome to various purposes. Your artwork might happen to become a poster or a printed material, so small-sized artwork might bring trouble in the future. Resizing the size from large to small is not a problem, but the opposite is not so easily done, so have a canvas as large as your PC lets you. Now let's begin to sketch out the silhouette onto the canvas.

You can either add a layer or you can have the background and character sketch on the same canvas. For me, I just add one layer above the background and sketch the character. At this stage, you only need to set the outline, pose and composition.

You can just start with the line sketch, or you can scan it from a paper sketch. I prefer to sketch with a thick brush rather than with lines



04

(**Fig.04**). It's simpler and faster for me to sketch quickly and with bold strokes.

Beginners usually get timid at this stage. You might have some awkwardness and flaws now, but it will be polished up as you work so don't worry too much now: just have a go!

Most of this image is sketched with the hard brush I set up at the beginning, though the softer skin sections are created with the soft brush with minimum hardness. It's better to use different brushes for different purposes. Try as many different brush settings as you want in order to find the brushes that fit you.

I then start adding a rough sketch for her costume (**Fig.05**). At this stage, you have to consider the direction of the light. I set the light in my image to originate from the upper-right side of the canvas.



05

The costume design is now becoming more apparent. To add a little visual fun, I choose to draw unbalanced pants. I draw the outline of her face and set the position of her eyes, nose and mouth (**Fig.06**). The point is not to focus on a detail, but draw a broad, overall silhouette. This way, you can get a good balance and continue the work with a proper stable base image.

As I have set the color tone to dark and plain in order to set the general mood, and have most of the shapes sketched in, the costume design starts to get a definite style. I've also come up with a special idea: the crow feather! I think it fits really well with the assassin's image (**Fig.07**).



06



07



Now we are moving toward the stage where the final image starts to take a more solid form in your head, and can begin adding in details (**Fig.08**). Again, unless you are a creative genius, don't try to set every detail from the first stage of the sketch. It is just way easier to do it like this. Get to the details as you draw and develop the image!

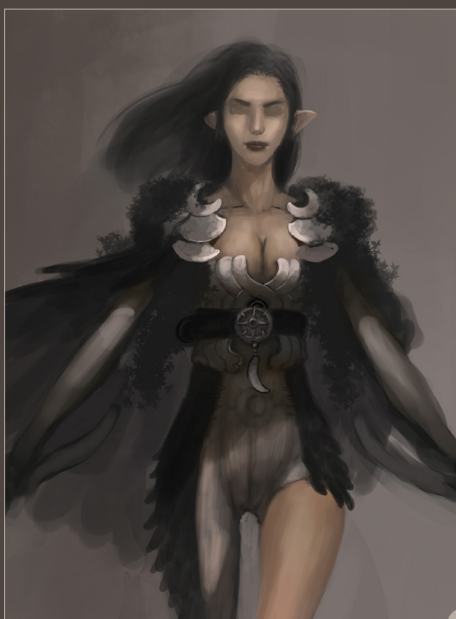
**Fig.09** shows how our image is becoming more detailed, and gradually coming out as a concept artwork. It's in the final stage of basic design. Now let's focus on her face. The most sophisticated and difficult parts to draw are those fine features on the face (**Fig.10**).

When people are first introduced to a character, they always naturally and instinctively study the face first, so viewers will instantly notice any awkwardness present in your image. Since a human face is made up of so many delicate bones and muscles, it's a really hard part of the body to draw from your imagination. Now would be an excellent time to look more deeply into the anatomy of the face.

Having a photo to refer to can be a nice solution. Don't refer to pictures by other artists, as they often have exaggerations and don't provide accurate information. I also advise you not to take pictures as a reference until you master the basic skills. After you have mastered the basic skills, you will be able to pick up on those slight accents in artists' pictures.

It's important to check the harmony and the consistency between the details and the whole image while you draw the face. To do this, open another canvas window from Window > Arrange > New Window for "filename" (**Fig.11**). Try to do this for all other parts of the body too; remember that if the balance collapses on the face or body, great expressions or details are lost.

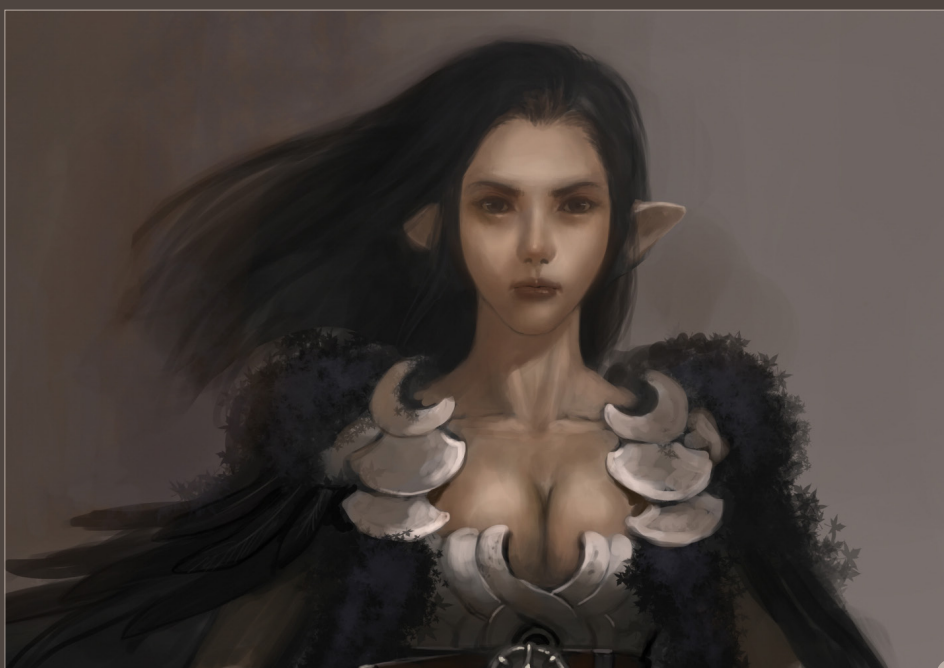
Next, it's time to begin polishing the awkwardness in her pose, the ratio of her body and adding in some other details.



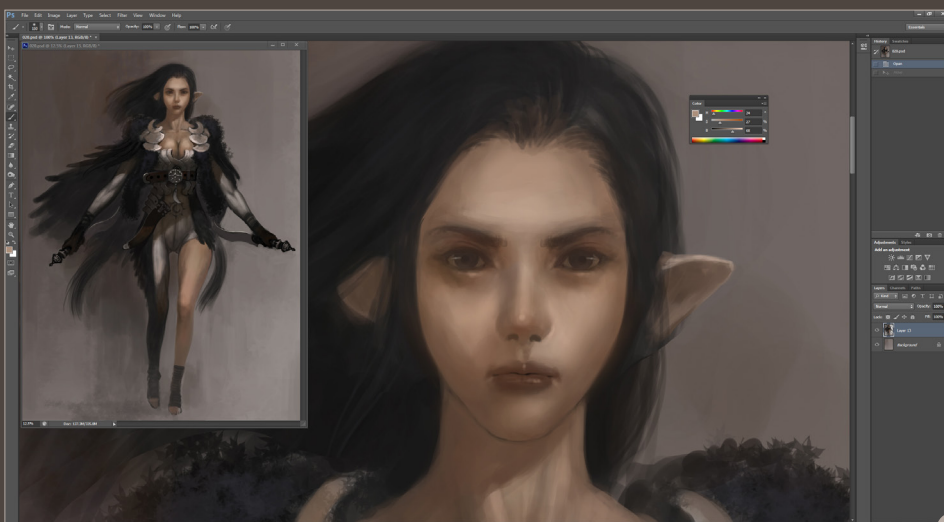
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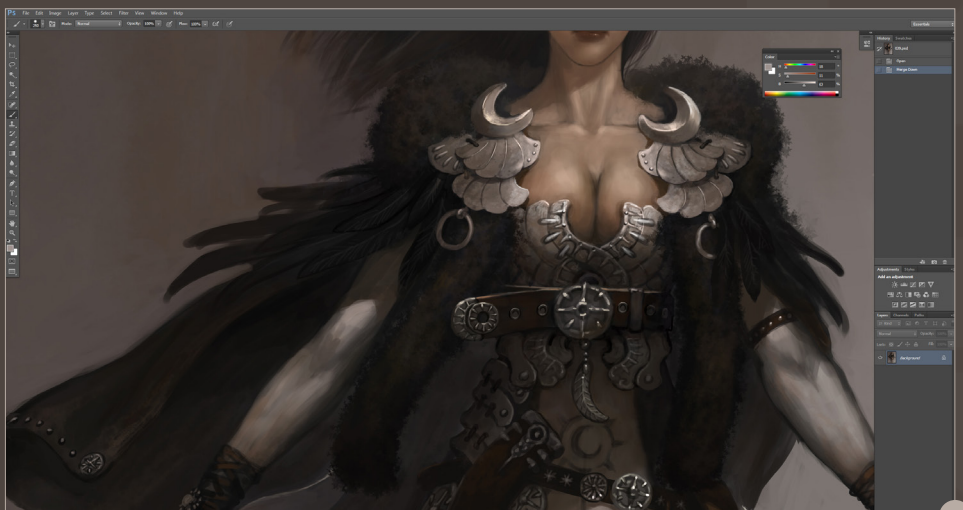
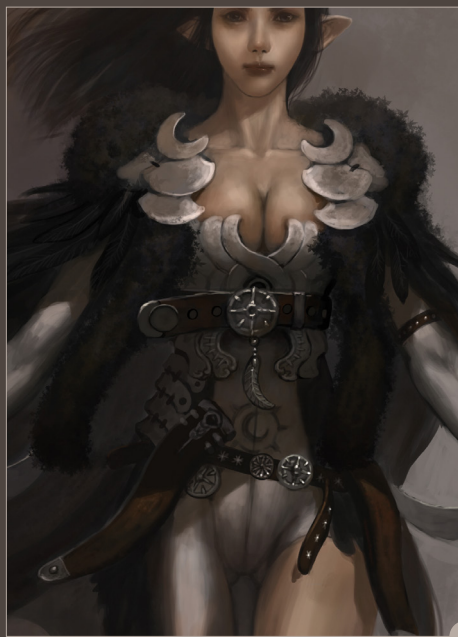


Originally, I planned to depict her in a full crow feather cloak, but have changed my mind and simply follow a more common cloak design (**Fig.12**). As the polishing is being done, you can change small details like this to suit your preferences.

Now we're slowly working towards a greater level of detail. You have to make the most of each material's characteristics, such as metal, leather, fur, feather, skin, etc. Referring to photos will help massively here (**Fig.13**).

The key factor that defines the feature of each material is light. If there's no light, you can't perceive the color, shape and material of an object. Understanding this principle is the key to creating realistic textures.

Usually, metals reflect light very strongly, so I give more contrast and strong highlights to the metallic sections in her armor (**Fig.14**). Fur is soft and absorbs light, so I give less contrast and weak highlights. Leather and feathers are somewhere in between, so they get a mix depending on their relation to the light source. For the leather, metal and rough touches in the background, I use the leaf-patterned brush I set up at the start.



The best way to determine the placement of these strokes in pictures is to observe and learn from your everyday surroundings. Only by continuous observation will you be able to express them properly.

Now we're getting closer to the end. I finish polishing the many details and the characteristics of each material in her costume. In reality, very few details have been changed: now only one horsetail decoration remains and a few more colors have been added. I polish the angles and skin on her face, put a little more effort into the texture in her hair, and stretch her legs to make them a little more in proportion with the rest of her body (**Fig.15**). Now is the time to check the overall balance.

As I mentioned before, one of the most important factors in your image is light. As you started from the dark, you have to work towards and finish with the bright highlights. Eventually, the concept can be completed by finishing the brightest part.

In my picture, I tune the Level option to increase the overall contrast (**Fig.16**). With Photoshop, you can add so much to your digital artwork. In drawing and designing, the best and the easiest way to master character creation is simply by drawing a lot!

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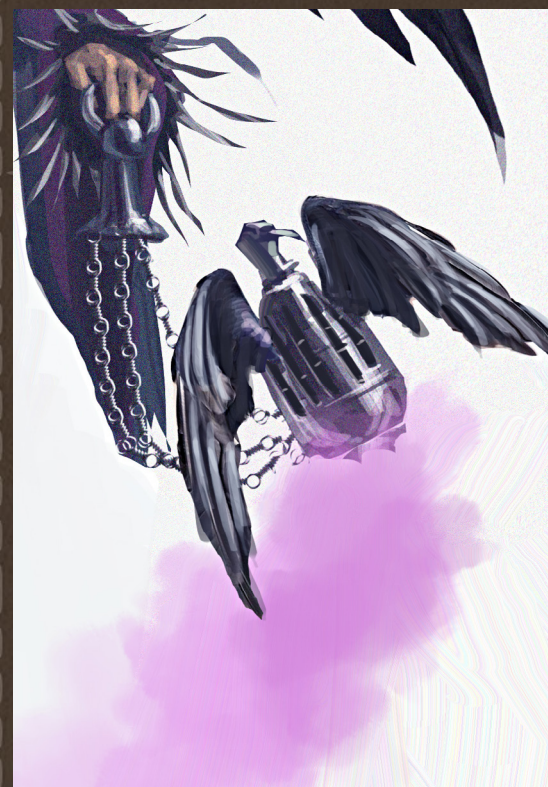
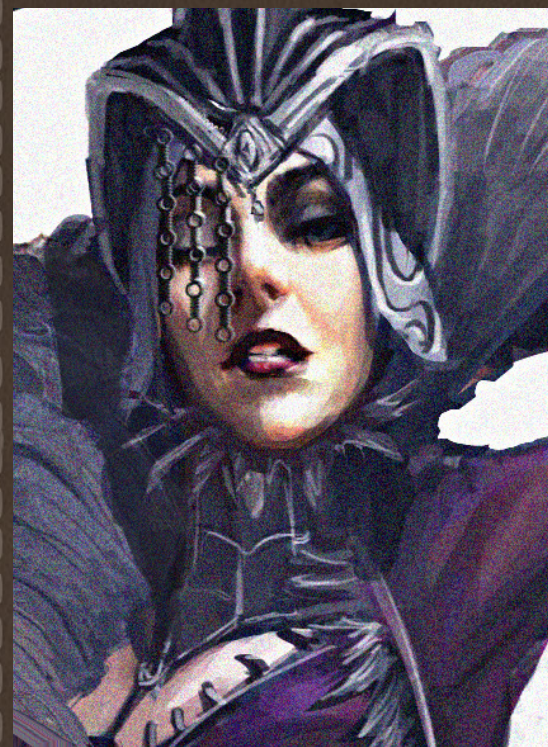




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05 MAGICIAN

# - COSTUME DESIGN -

Costume design is an important element to character design as it helps to enhance a character's personality. You can create an evolving plot of color, changing social status, or period through the visual design of garments and accessories. In this tutorial series each artist has been presented with a games-like brief describing a character from a certain section of a fantasy medieval world, and they must design clothing suitable for that character's job description.



## Chapter 05 – Magician

Software Used: Photoshop

### Introduction

This tutorial is one of many processes that can be used and applied when working on creating quick character and costume concepts. It is a step-by-step in producing a character and costume with a specific occupation in a fantasy, medieval world.

In the process you will see the mistakes I make and how I constantly fix things. It's important to remember that everyone makes mistakes and it is not wrong to make them. It is normal to not get it right on your first go, so don't be afraid.

With a solid foundation, you only need basic knowledge of Photoshop to start coming up with concepts digitally. So please don't skip on your foundations!

There are many advantages to Photoshop digital painting, from layering and creating custom brushes to image adjustments and



01

saving your work. In addition, I use a default round brush for 99% of the painting.

### Step 1: Thumbnails and Silhouettes

I always start a project with research, relaxing and spending some time on the internet, looking at magazines, visiting museums etc. After some research I begin the thumbnail sketches to explore some shapes and to warm-up. This stage is not about a pretty picture and isn't something you will be showing your client or an art director; this is more for yourself and it is important to stay loose and exercise your brain.

I like to splash some values and do some line drawings on top – it's almost like doing a gesture drawing with broad brush strokes and dressing them up with lines. I still prefer some line drawings because it defines shapes a little more and it gets me thinking more clearly about what I am drawing.



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## Step 2: Start With a Loose Sketch

I start by establishing an overall pose, working very quickly and focusing on gesture to get a feel for her character. It is basically a gesture drawing and it helps me to get a vague idea of the character, but things can change later on.

I am not painting a background for her, so it is faster and gives a more defined look as a result. This also allows me to really focus on the subject and enjoy designing.

At this stage, I start thinking about words to describe the character, such as elegant, opulent, confident and sharp, etc. I am trying to translate it visually in her gesture to set the look.

## Step 3: Add Value Masses

Here I am just blocking out with masses of dark values to give volume, working very fast and loose. I'm not worried about filling it with solid color just yet; I like leaving spots of lights to give some room for happy accidents.

From the first two steps, I have an idea that she would be wearing something tight to her body and so it is important for me to think about her anatomy. I am also starting to think about



05



breaking her silhouette by adding a headdress, just adding a mass to remind myself to re-visit the head area.

I usually start with grayscale, which allows me to focus on design and not be struggling with getting the colors correct. Usually in a first concept design review, I deliver my work in black and white with value break-ups.

### Step 4: Begin the Design

I create a new layer with a white fill. I then layer it on top with a slight transparency, so her body is slightly see-through. Because the overall pose and the body is established underneath, I can now focus on dressing her up.

I start with a simple dress and I imagine her in heels so she stands tall. I add a major shape around her head, almost like a standing collar, but with a raven wing outline. No details yet, just some hints of what it could be and making some marks that may be used or not.

I start sketching her face to see what she could look like; she doesn't have the right feel yet. I will be spending some time on the face later because it is a very important area of focus.



06

### Step 5: Roughing in the Design

I continue to work on her face, which is giving a better feel. I then start to look at some graphical break-ups that are simple and directional. The main focus here is her face, so I am trying to keep the lines flowing upwards. I find it better to

keep this simple and not over-complicate it with over-crowded lines. I always remind myself that this is not a texture; it is more like an internal silhouette and material break-up.

I start roughing in some details on her head. I do not like the approach, so I will be painting it out later on after I understand more about the rest of the design. It is a place-holder for now.

### Step 6: Add Details

Remember to flip your canvas every now and then; it will give you a fresh view of your work and make it easier to spot problems. I use it often, so I have created a keyboard shortcut by going to Edit > Keyboard Shortcut. It is a very useful tool to keep me refreshed and awake.

I start exploring some details, and I start to add some pointy elements and hints of chains to give it the cold and dangerous feel. I leave the head piece for now, although I am thinking about it while I start to work on other areas. This can lead me to accidental ideas, so I am not in a hurry to solve this.



07



## Step 7: Using Color Balance

To add an overall color to a grayscale image, I like to use the Color Balance from Image > Adjustments > Color Balance option. I cool down the piece and start working on her skin. I create a new layer with a Soft Light blend mode on top and begin to add some skin colors. It is looking a bit too warm at the moment, but I can easily adjust this later.

I usually create another layer on top and actually paint in some colors to get a raw and vibrant look. Particularly on the flesh tones to avoid the colors looking de-saturated, I add yellow, red and cool colors.

## Step 8: Create a Custom Brush

Here I extend the canvas to give me more space to work, so I am not restricting myself with design. I start adding magenta to give a poisonous feel and re-visit her headwear design. I am looking at a more specific hood with a stiff frame sticking out, with lappets draping on the sides. It is very rough, but clear enough to see it coming along with the dress.

I decide that I want more chains in her costume, and there is a specific chain link that I have in mind. I create a shape of a single link with solid color on a new layer, and to create a custom brush, I select the shape and go to Edit > Define Brush Preset. I then go to the brush setting and adjust Brush Angle to 90 degrees and the Space to 210%, tick Shape Dynamics and set the Angle Jitter control to Direction.

## Step 9: Refine and Change

I flip the canvas again to make sure that my decisions are working. Using the new chain brush, I add chains to her dress and to the thurible. I want something light as her weapon to go with her character, and I also add a staff to hint at her occupation.

I work on the details more, slowly building it up to a more presentable piece. Bear in mind that



08



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this is more of a suggestive painting to convey an idea and is not a perfectly resolved design piece. Suggestive painting is useful for painting something quick and moody, which is very useful for the first round of reviews.

I pay a little more attention to the wing around her head because it is a major part of the character's design.

## Step 10: Final Touch Ups

I finish the overall design and get the look that I was after; from here it is all about rendering and being decisive. I decide to make some final design decisions to make sure all the design elements are strong and clear.



I start looking at the secondary elements in the image: her staff and thurible. I really want to add more raven elements into the design, so I introduce the claws to her staff and a wing to the thurible, almost like she has trapped a raven in the censer.

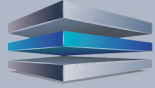
I get rid of the cloth behind her because it wasn't functioning very well. For a final stage, I change the direction of the thurible, the smoke and the wing collar for compositional purpose.

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# EVOLUTION

## Chapter 2

When designing characters for movies or video games, it's important to think about the different possible worlds and how a human character could have evolved to cope with his/her environment. In this tutorial series, each artist will take us through their design process, exploring a variety of factors that would effect and influence the character's evolution and anatomy, to convey a visual idea that could be passed on to a 3D modeler or art director.



## Chapter 02 – Arctic

Software Used: Photoshop

### Introduction

The idea behind this tutorial was to design some characters that look as though they had evolved to survive in an arctic climate where conditions were extreme.

Obviously the environment was a determining factor and would dictate many of the decisions with respect to the costume design, but alongside this were the cultural issues which would also have an impact on their appearance.

Because polar regions prohibit the growth of crops and food stuffs that other parts of the world take for granted, it does mean that the inhabitants rely mainly on meat as their primary food source. This type of environment has a very limited number of resources and as such, the people there have evolved to hunt for food, often requiring them to travel long distances in harsh conditions.

Undoubtedly the cold is perhaps the greatest threat and therefore this was a key consideration when designing the clothing.

The indigenous people needed to be able to survive for lengthy periods whilst navigating ice flows and freezing water and so their clothing needed to reflect these factors.

### Thumbnails

The first stage in the process involved doing a sheet of thumbnails exploring numerous ideas and designs. In many ways, this is the most important part of the design process as it sets a precedent for the final concept. Although the concluding design may deviate from the preliminary sketches, it generally reflects many of the initial decisions and ideas. Generally my finished concept is an amalgamation of various aspects taken from different sketches.

Starting on a small scale by creating what is termed “thumbnails” is useful to quickly draw as many figures as possible. It can either be

done in line or alternatively you can opt to draw in silhouette fashion, which is equally valid. Sometimes the shape of an object is more descriptive than the culmination of details and so working in this way can open your mind to different interpretations and help you to see things unimagined.

This can be approached using a group of random marks and brush strokes, which are then “hewn” by way of the eraser to approximate the shape of a character. Once this is established you can then go on to flesh out the details or draw in the line work.

**Fig.01** shows an example of how two characters can begin as silhouettes and then be detailed using line. There are numerous ways to interpret a silhouette and often it is worth roughing in a few designs based upon a single thumbnail.

An alternative method is to aim somewhere between the two approaches and use shapes to delineate the detail.







02

**Fig.02** shows an example of this whereby a silhouette was blocked in first and then some evidence of clothing added over the top.

conventional costume. The two left characters on the second and third row also look quite conventional, but in a more Lappish style.

of materials available to them, the obvious one being animal fur. I also considered how clothing traps our body heat and bounces it back onto or skin, and how by wearing multiple layers we can keep warmer. As a result I made many of the characters look plump and well padded,

**Fig.03** shows a final set of character thumbnails, which start in the upper left with a more

Whilst sketching I was thinking about ways in which people could keep warm and the types



03





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incorporating air pockets within their clothing to trap heat.

As well as this principal I began thinking about how people have used heating ducts in conjunction with wood burners in order to transfer heat around their homes, and the principles behind a boiler.

With this in mind I started to place canisters and tubular accessories on a number of characters to explore the possibility of suits incorporating slow-burning fuel that could be used to warm the clothing for long periods, such as carbon-based elements and animal fats.

The other benefit of having air-filled pockets around the body was that if a person fell into the sea through thin ice, for example, the suit would act as a life jacket and keep them buoyant.

## Sketching

Once I had established a few ideas during the initial stage I began making some larger scale sketches to explore these in more depth.

I liked the idea of padded clothing that contained small air pockets that could perhaps serve to circulate warm air around the body. In **Fig.04** you can see two variations based upon these notions, which also show headgear to insulate

the head. I included some fur on the upper character as well as giving the other person a harpoon to prevent the costumes looking too “high tech”.

Another aspect I considered was some form of protective face mask or breathing apparatus for use in particularly harsh weather and blizzards. Ice usually forms around the nose and mouth due to exhaling warm air and so something to

alleviate this would be greatly beneficial. Of equal relevance was something to help reduce glare and protect the eyes, and so I went on to incorporate both of these ideas into the following three sketches.

**Fig.05** shows a character wearing a protective face mask and goggles, as well as some shoulder fins to shield against harsh winds and driving snow. He also incorporates padded



05





06

clothing and some extra insulation around the hands, which are always vulnerable to the cold.

**Fig.06** takes this type of design a step further, giving the costumes a more sophisticated appearance and also suggesting the inclusion of some technology.

Although I liked some of the aspects to these, Fig.04 – 05 did resemble pilots and maintenance crew, which was not my intention. I did not want to create a science fiction-looking character, but rather wanted to show a civilization that had somehow evolved to harness some of their available resources.

## Having a Blend

There are always certain things you like and dislike about each design, but this process helps filter these aspects down to the ones that are more preferable or appropriate.

## Final Designs

Having explored various avenues I had a good notion of which characteristics to include in the final version, which are as follows:

- The use of animal fur and leather obtained from hunting

- Some version of face protection or breathing apparatus
- A form of heating that helps keep the body warm on long journeys
- Clothing that contains heated air pockets, which also act as a good buoyancy device when in water.

**Fig.07** shows the initial block-in of the first of two designs, showing a conventional fur hood and a skirt that wraps around the legs for extra protection against harsh weather. This can be opened via the small rivets when the person needs to run or travel quickly or alternatively closed for walking and bad conditions.

There is a belt around which supplies and fuel can be hung, as well as a chest-mounted canister from which to deliver heat into the suit.

As you can see, I began working in black and white and then moved into color by way of a Multiply layer.

I gave one of my thumbnail sketches some snow shoes, but instead of the antiquarian “tennis rackets” I decided to create boots with a wide padded base to help disperse weight over the snow and ice.



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In **Fig.08** you can see a more advanced state with the canister in a better perspective and connected to the suit via a small hose. The boots have spikes around the sole which will help grip on to slippery surfaces.

For the final version of the first character, I added a face mask for protection, as well as





09

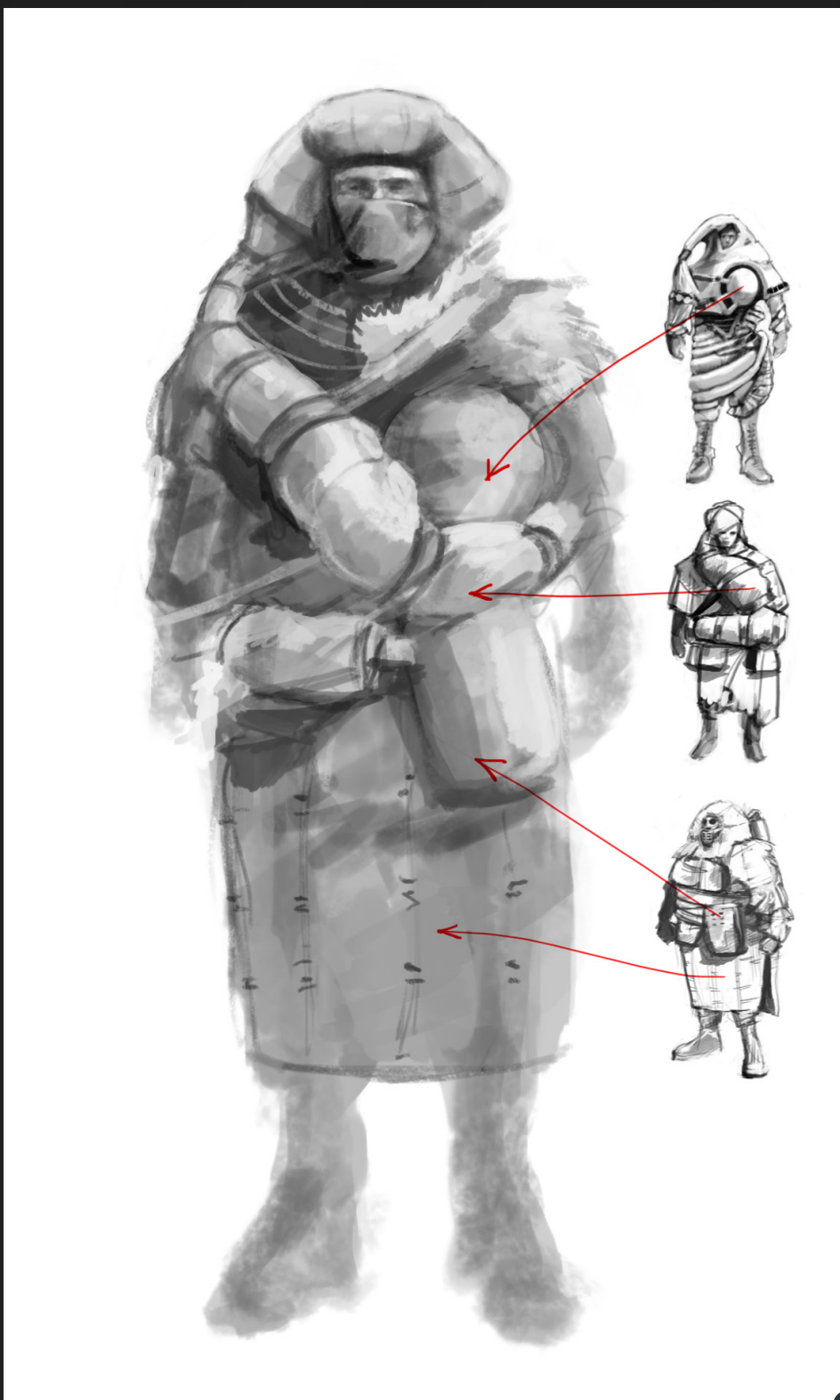
some decorative patterns across the skirt to add interest (Fig.09).

The second character utilizes other components from the thumbnail sheet, including the three seen on the right in Fig.10. As previously mentioned, my final designs tend to be a hybrid of various sketches.

In this case I wanted to create a more unusual appearance and so combined a mixture of reasonably advanced-looking components with more primitive ones. In this case the heater, located at waist level, is connected to the headgear via a pipe that wraps around the torso.

This character also boasts a face mask with a protective visor, which can be detached and separated into two pieces. In fine weather it can be removed entirely or alternatively the left or right section can be attached separately to shield cross winds.

One thing that has not been mentioned is physiology and the ways in which an arctic climate affects the human body. Generally a compact build conserves warmth and an optimal



10

distribution of body fat is important to keep vital organs warm.

As my characters were well padded it made it quite difficult to portray their anatomical appearance, but a short, stocky physique seemed appropriate.

Their diet would consist almost entirely of meat and fish, much of which would need to be eaten raw in order to get vitamin C.

At this time my characters were looking too tall and slim to fit this description, but I knew I could use the Warp tool later to modify their anatomy.





11



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Once the general shapes were blocked in, I began clarifying the headgear and mask as well the boots and equipment (**Fig.11**).

**Fig.12** shows the initial color stage, which was once again applied on a new layer set to Multiply. Once I was satisfied, I flattened them and continued adding more details and refinements on additional layers before repeating the procedure.

From here it was a short step to completing the character by building on what had already been established. Although the final versions are not replicas of any one thumbnail or sketch, they do borrow from the initial ideas.

I added a secondary hose feeding into the circular breast plate, which would deliver heat to the center of the torso and major organs.



13



I also added a Curves adjustment layer to increase the contrast and place highlights across the right side of the character (**Fig.13**).

Finally I used the Warp tool to shorten the character and give him a more compact stature, which would help him to survive in the cold climate.

**Richard Tilbury**

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# 2DA next month

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## Interviews

Nicolas Weis

## Articles

Sketchbook of Denis Medri

## Tutorials

Heroes and Villains

Chapter 3: Moonshine

by Fernando Acosta

## Fantasy Worlds

Chapter 2: City/Residential Architecture

by YongSub Noh

## Costume Design

Chapter 6: Jester

by Ahmed Aldoori

## Evolution

Chapter 3: Low Gravity

by Charlie Bowater

## Making of

Charlotte #1 by Khasis Lieb


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Image By Byzwa Dher





"When creating a speed painting I focus on what is clear according to the title of the scene"

# LANDSCAPE SPEEDPAINT

MAKING OF BY BYZWA DHER

Freelance digital artist Byzwa Dher, shares some of his thought process and techniques to create landscapes in this step-by-step project overview of his image *Landscape Speedpaint*.



## Landscape Speedpaint

Software Used: Photoshop

### Introduction

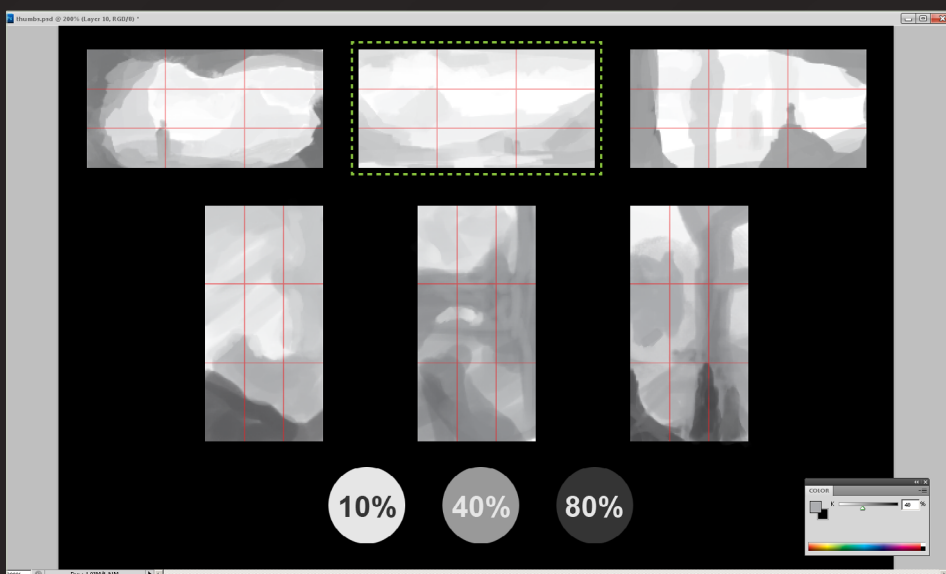
When creating a speed painting I focus on what is clear according to the title of the scene. It is a fast method of painting without significantly refined details, where the result is basically a sketch with clear composition, colors and light. This sketch can be used for further repainting.

Personally I really like this method because the painting arises very quickly and it mainly catches the atmosphere that I want to put across to the viewer. I am a big fan of impressionism and that is why my final stylization of the painting can be reminiscent of this style.

### Thought, Preparation, Thumbnails

Every artist has probably been met with the obstacle of: what will I paint? First of all I had to help myself a little bit. I used some methods that could turn the vision in my head into the clear form to be developed in the future. I used thumbnails for the pre-treatment of the painting.

I applied basic values for the representation of the composition and the depth for future painting. I applied these values in thumbnails



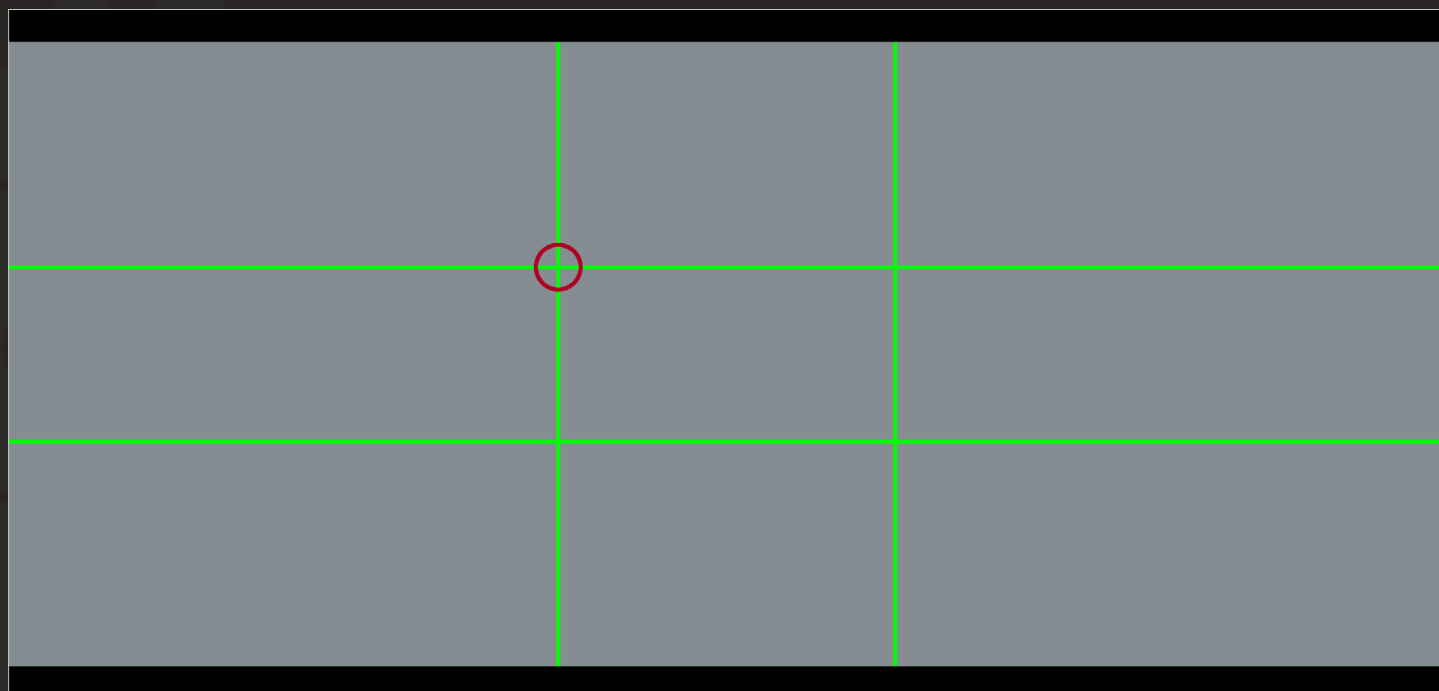
with a very small resolution by using the default Chalk brush with active opacity. I tried to make the basic landscape elements clear (foreground: 80% black, mid-ground: 40% black, and background: 10% black). The red lines divided the painting into thirds, which helped me place the objects into focal points in the intersections.

### Canvas

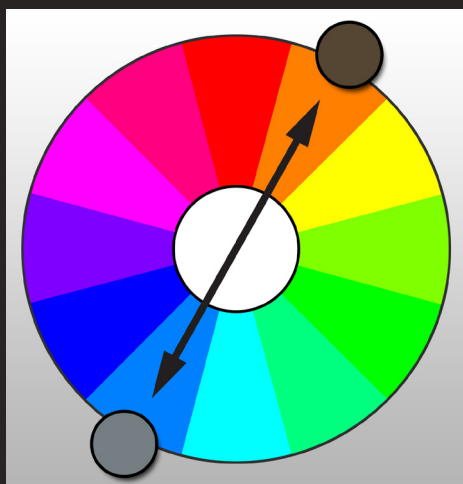
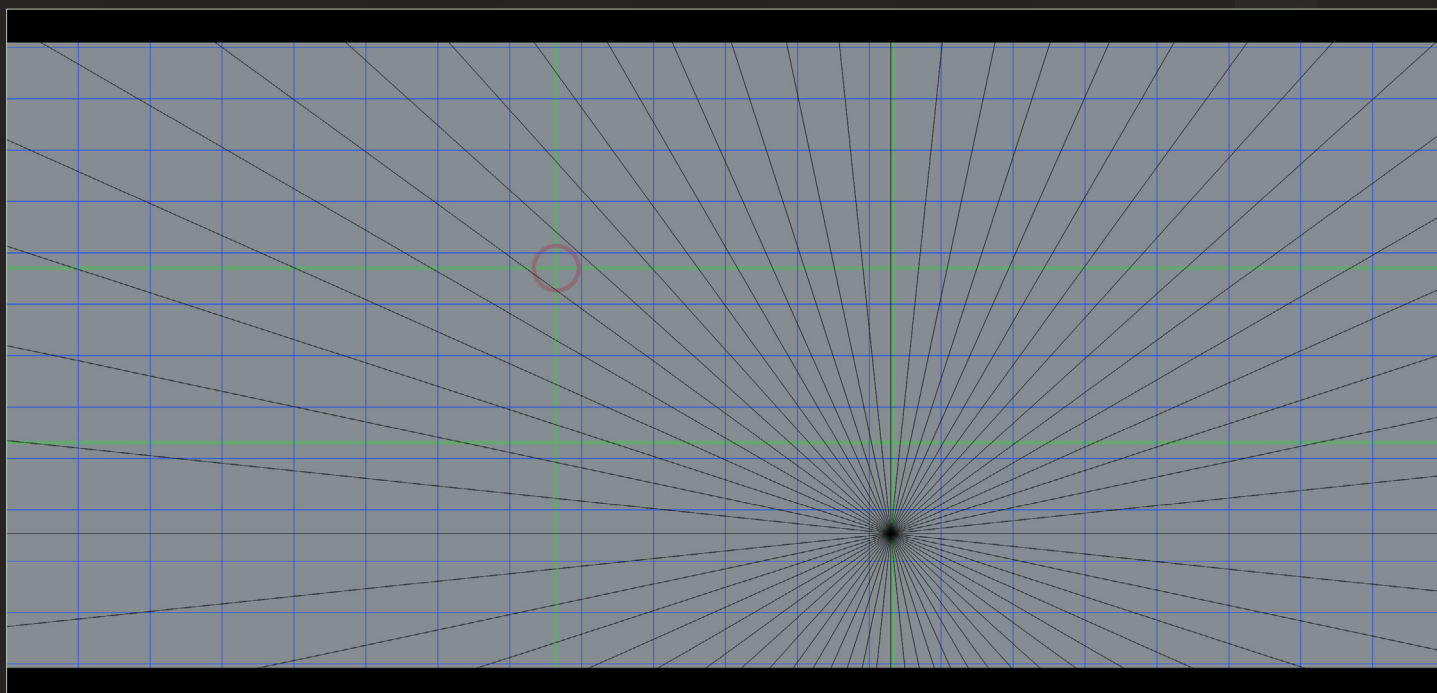
The chosen thumbnail helped me to achieve a clear image of the painting. I saw it as a quiet, historical landscape with hills. I decided to highlight the history by including a castle as the main theme in the scene.

The whole canvas was divided into thirds in the golden section ratio. The circles indicated the main parts in the scene, where I wanted to focus the viewer's eye. Into this part I placed the castle and I put in something to represent a human presence in the other parts. In this case it was a ship sailing to the castle.

Sometimes I build up the elements of the painting directly during its creation, according to my internal feelings. These feelings suggest to me that it'll be okay to incorporate them. Here the background layer was filled with a color, which I will describe in the next step.







### Perspective, Basic Colors and Shapes

I did not use an aggressive or dynamic camera perspective in this scene. I wanted to make this scene act peacefully and also make it easy for the viewer to read. Therefore I chose a simple, one-point perspective.

I started by blocking in the basic shapes of the hills. I chose a basic color palette. I decided on a significantly desaturated complementary combination of blue-green for the sky and the atmosphere, and red-orange to emphasize the earthy shapes close to the camera. I liked the contrast of colors and this kind of palette helped me to achieve this.

Next I created a new layer where I built the shapes up with quick strokes, working from the background towards the camera using the Chalk brush with opacity.

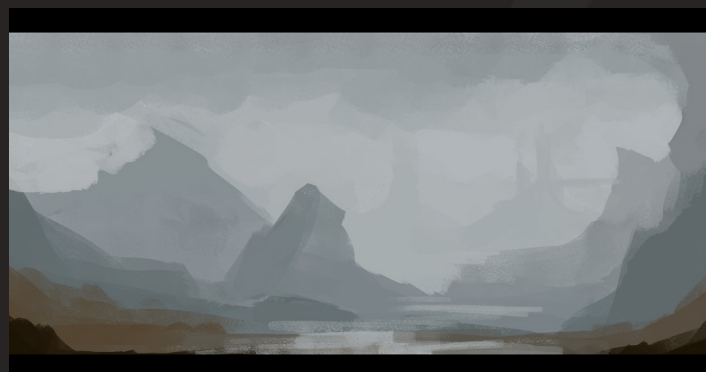
I applied the rough shapes of the hills towards the camera with a cool blue-green color to highlight the atmospheric perspective. I also used some warm red-orange tones for the landscape in the foreground.

### Background – Sky

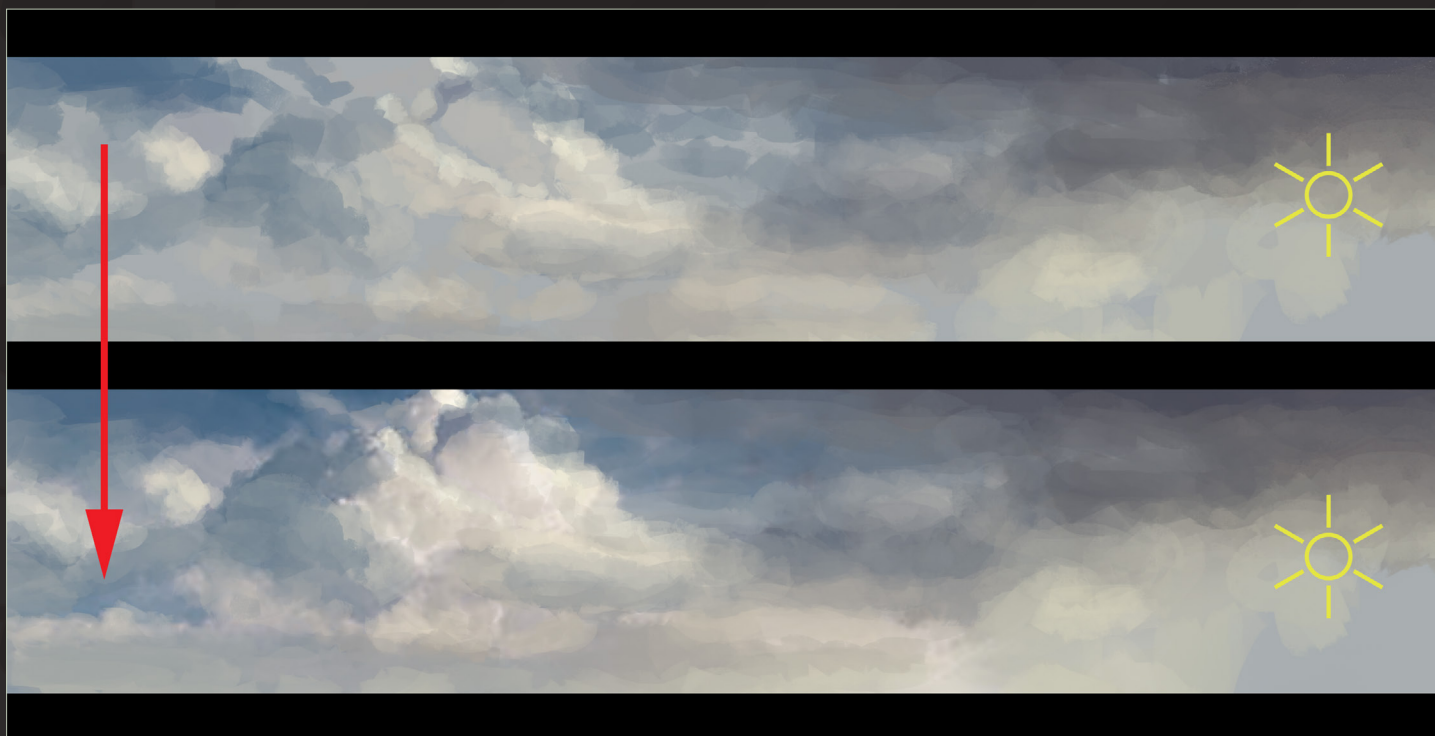
The sky was another important element of this painting as the sky is the main element of beauty in any environment design. For a moment I turned off a layer with blocks of hills and I began to build the sky in a similar way to the layer below it.

I decided that the daytime sky should have expressive clouds in the focal line above the castle. I looked at reference images of the sky on the internet for inspiration about the shape of the clouds and shading. Inspiration is very important; therefore it is good to still look at references even if you know your subject well.

I applied the color to show light clouds, which I chose as a source of light coming from the right-hand side of the scene. I used the default







Chalk brush with active opacity pressure. I tried to keep this lighting for illuminating every object in the scene.

## Adding Detail to the Hills and Foreground

After finishing off the sky details, I turned on the layer with the blocks of hills to assess how the sky worked with the scene objects. When I felt it was okay I started to shape the foreground. I looked at reference images for the hills in the same way that I'd done previously for the sky.

I wanted earthy colors for the hills this time and I tried to capture their structure. These hills were the nearest objects to the camera and therefore they needed to be more detailed than the hills in the background, and of stronger contrast against the background.

I used the default Chalk brush with active texture in paint. It helped to deliver an interesting structure. I fine-tuned other details such as the shape of the river and its lighting.

The mountain on which I wanted to place the castle was the next step in creating the scene. At first it looked very flat and uninteresting. I





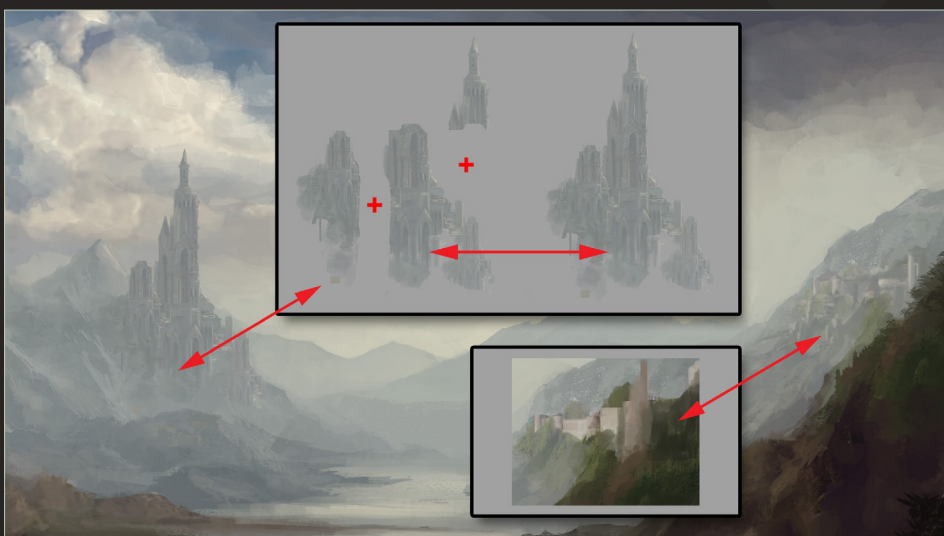


used a basic hard brush with active pressure opacity and a lighter value of blue to highlight the area to simulate the lighting of the hill from the source. This technique made the hill more photorealistic.

## Castle

In this step I focused on the primary element of the scene: the castle. I placed it on a more detailed hill, draped in the atmosphere. It had to be a shade of blue to fit in with the rest of the colors in the scene.

I made shapes for all the different parts of the castle, such as the tower and pillars, which then created the whole castle when combined together. By painting every single part of the castle separately, rather than painting a solid

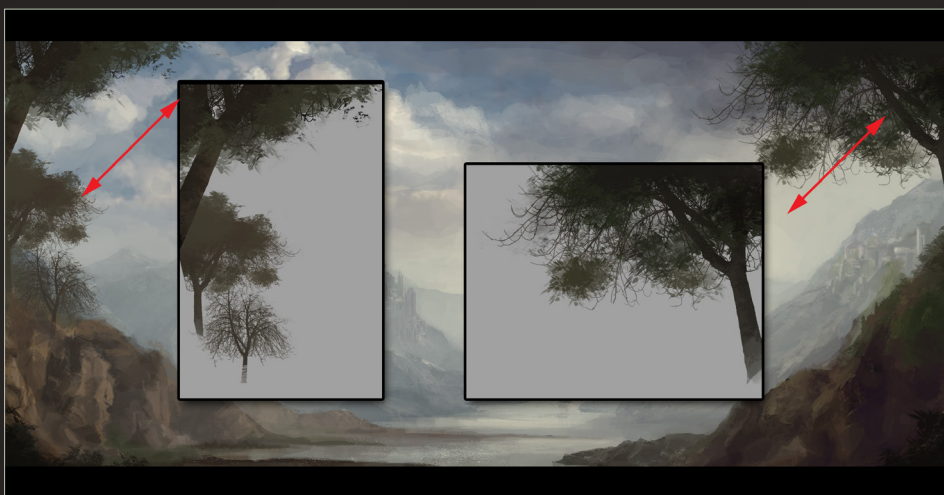
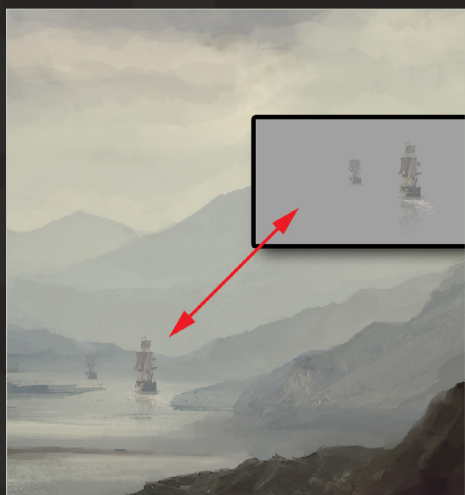


concrete shape, I was able to play with the castle design more effectively. It would have been much more difficult to make any changes to a solid shape.

I decided to place a town on the right side of the hill as a sign of human presence. This small town was built from rough details up to the final shape and adapted to the atmospheric plane.







## Atmospheric Division of the Hills and Boats

I divided the hills by placing fog between them to achieve a sequence of hills in the perspective.

I used a large soft brush with a light color to highlight the top of the hill contour. The hills did not consist of one blue color, but their transitions were more significant.

I decided to revive the river by placing in some old boats, which brought a bit of narrative and movement to the painting. The viewer's mind could create the main storyline, such as expedition boats going to explore the castle. Each scene should have some sort of story, like it's a clip cut from the movie.

The procedure to add the boats was the same as adding the castle. I made the shape of the boat, added its lighting and I made a boat reflection on the water. I also tried to make the dynamics of the waves follow the movement of the boats with a white color.

## Trees

I started to add natural elements into the scene by adding green colors in. To create the effect of

leaves I used some amazing vegetation foliage brushes from the great artist Markus Lovadina aka Malo: <http://donmalo.deviantart.com>

I like trees as a repeated element that supports a painting's depth. I worked up the tree trunks and branches with a dark brown color. I simulated the leaves with a foliage brush and green color. I determined the values of the individual trees in the scene according to their position in the perspective. More contrasted trees were added in the front and the ones in the background had less contrast.

I decided to add a small number of human beings to the scene to enrich the narrative. I use humans there mainly to indicate the scale of scenes, to give the viewer some impression of the size of the environment.

## Last Modified Scene Details

I decided to add a similar shape to the castle in the final detailing of the scene. It served to achieve a greater sense of depth within the scene. The placement of such objects can create a path for the viewer's eyes to follow through a painting.







A quick touch-up of all the objects in the scene was the last step before it was ready to be finalized. I completed the shapes of the hills, details of the foreground and the castle. Finally I added the highlights with a distinct light color on

the river, hills, boats and people in the direction of the light source.

### Color Correction and Conclusion

The scene was done and finally I could make

color corrections. I really like to use these because they can bring a painting together.

In this case, I didn't use anything special. I just used classic Color Balance to add highlights





to the warm colors, and warm lighting and shadows to the cold colors. I colored the highlights with yellowish colors and for the shadows I used some bluer tones. I also used the Brightness/Contrast options to highlight the values of the colors.

And as this was the last step, I used a Smart Sharpen filter and also a Trace Contour filter, to highlight the strokes. I made sun rays by doing straight strokes away from the source and I added bird shapes as the last element to bring the image alive.

## Conclusion

In my opinion it is very fun to design these kinds of scenes. Many times I have an idea in my mind, which I would like to display. These techniques allow me to do it. I hope the techniques that I introduced in this project overview have been interesting to you and will be useful in the future when designing your landscape speed paintings.

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Sample Chapter

# UBERMESSER- SCHMITT

EXCLUSIVE MAKING OF BY TOBIAS TREBELJAHR



## Ubermesserschmitt

Software Used: Photoshop

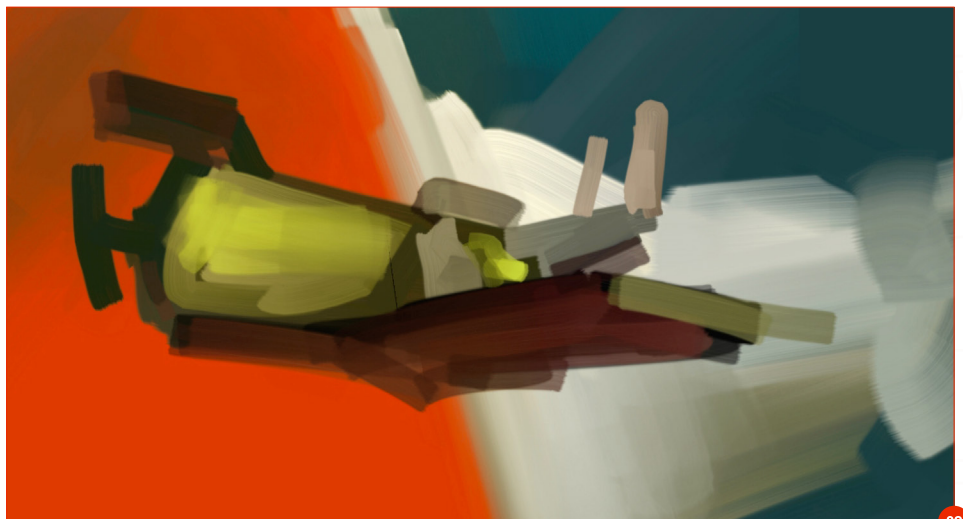
### My Painting

The original plan when starting this image was just to practice exaggerating a classical airplane design and to create a vintage poster with some retro-tag lines. At the time I was feeling kind of guilty for not using the huge sketchbook I was given at Christmas. Because of this I took a break from my usual tiny pencil sketches and started a bigger, more complete drawing.

After a few thumbnails where I tried to nail down a pleasing silhouette and camera angle, I sketched the drawing. The drawing you can see in **Fig.01** is about 20 x 25 inches in size.

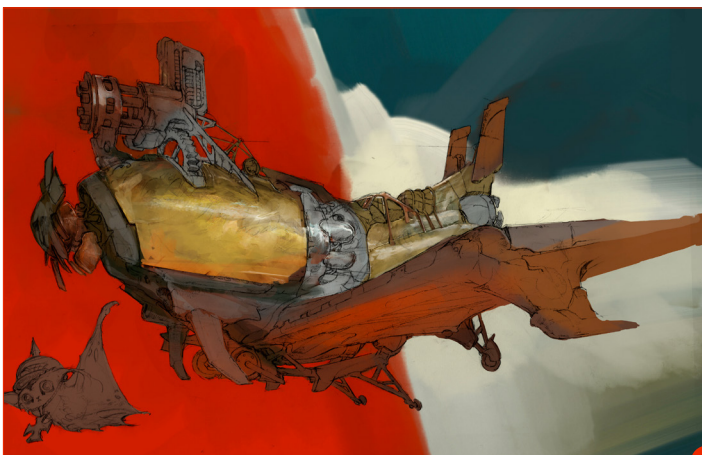
The final aircraft design was like a bloated plane where the engine was clearly visible in places, almost like an American hot rod. It was decorated with a savage-looking paint job and equipped with a ridiculously overpowered mini-gun (which would actually block the pilot's view, but it looked good so I left it in). The flying squirrel was just for fun at this point. I changed almost everything about it later, but by the end I liked to think of it as the picture's heart.

Before starting on the final image I usually try out a few different color schemes to see what will work in the composition. I love to use Corel Painter to do this as the colors are incredibly fun to handle (and mess around with). I ended up with a muted, military green and silver for the airplane, contrasting with a bold red backdrop, slicing the workspace in two (**Fig.02**).



The next step was to scan the drawing and put it into Photoshop so I could start rendering. I firstly painted below the sketch with a solid color using the Lasso and Fill tools. In a layer above this I started working in some form and volume, and started painting in some lighting and detail (**Fig.03 – 04**).

I slowly started to notice that the background was looking a bit boring and began to think that there was an opportunity to paint in something awesome going on there. I took a little time to generate some good ideas and to think of a new composition, and then the idea came to me. The re-imagined Messerschmitt should have an interesting backdrop, so I enlarged the canvas





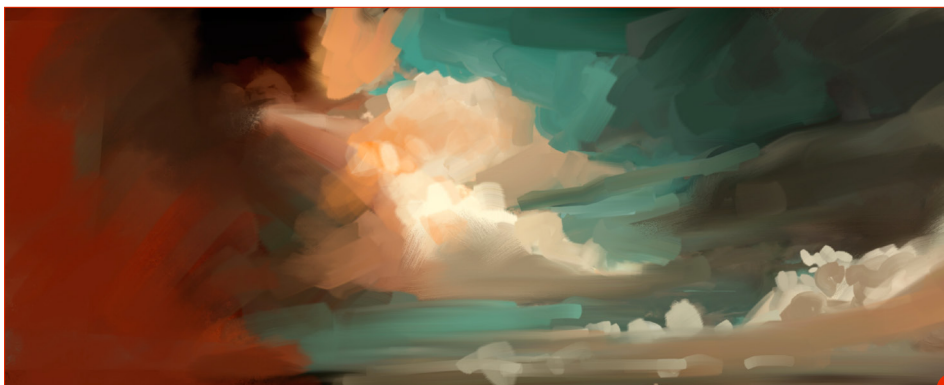


05

on every side and started to block in some new shapes (**Fig.05**).

What was once was a plain red shape now became part of a huge sky vessel. I had to be careful not to add too much detail to the background because together with the saturated colors, it could divert the viewer's attention away from the point of interest. By keeping it simple it had more impact and provided a nice backdrop for the main focal point.

Instead of another flat surface as a backdrop, on the right I opened up a vast cloudscape, which gave my image enormous depth. This distance contrasted nicely with the proximity of the objects on the left. Again, I used Painter to help me choose the colors I wanted to use (**Fig.06 – 07**).



06

You can do awesome things with Photoshop's Smudge tool, but whenever it comes to doing soft-edged things such as fire or clouds, Painter seems to work better for me.

The bright red ships in the background serve two purposes. For a start, without them the red space by the main focal point would be

confusing and seem strange. The other purpose of the smaller ships is to show depth by way of perspective.

When it came to painting the first of these smaller ships something became quite clear. All of these smaller ships needed to demonstrate the same proportions and design. When



07

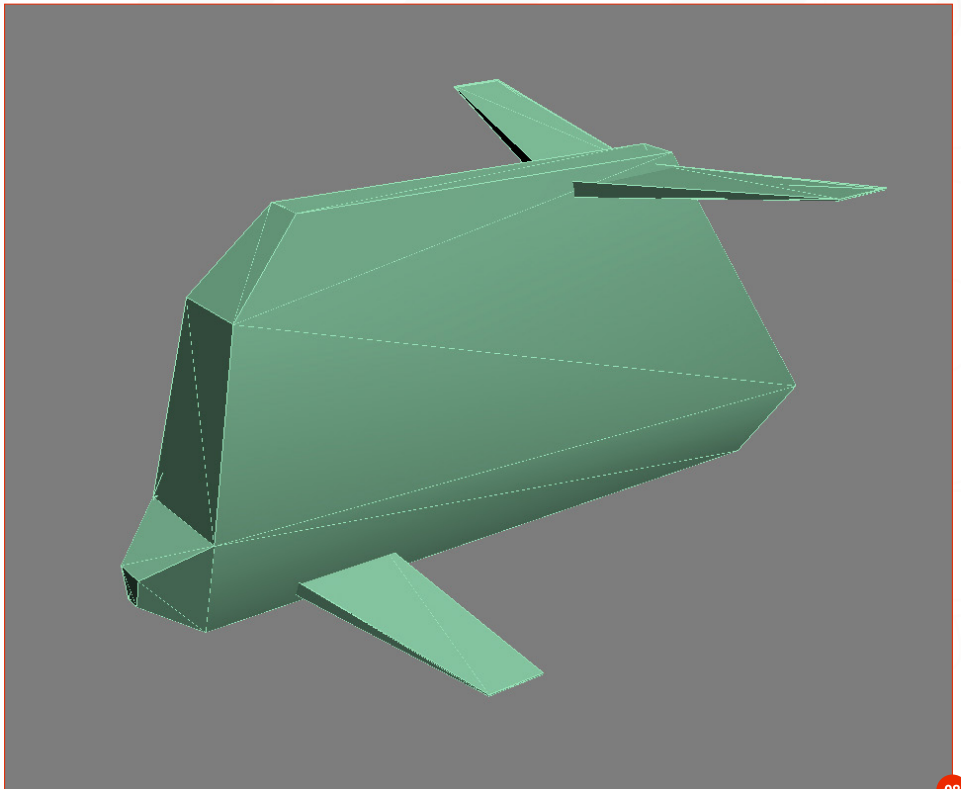


something like this comes up in your paintings it is always worth thinking about using 3D. Making a quick ship in 3D was pretty swift (**Fig.08**).

After preparing the painting for the arrival of this new element, I copied the 3D ship several times and positioned the copies in places that seemed to work well with the composition. This process is really helpful because with one click on the Render button you can create an armada of ships with perfect perspective and proportions (**Fig.09**).

Now my lonesome aircraft was just a small part of a mighty fleet crossing the sky (**Fig.10**).

For the paint job on the red ships I found a nice font that seemed to contrast with the overall war theme. These sorts of contrasts always seem to add some extra fun to an image.



08



09



10



I was almost done at this point, but the composition still seemed a little dull and frozen. To add the feeling of movement I added several trails of steam evaporating from the engines. For some of the objects that were moving quickly (propeller, bat's wings, etc..) I used some Motion Blur. Not too much though, because these filters can quickly kill the painterly feeling.

One thing that can be great for unifying your scene is to let the light bleed into the shadows. To do this, copy and merge the flattened image, and lay it on top of your layer stack. Then apply some Gaussian Blur and set the layer to Lighten. The higher the blur radius and opacity, the stronger the blooming effect will be (**Fig.11**). Be careful not to go crazy though, because if the effect is too strong it can look really bad.

At this point the image was almost finished. After taking a good look at the painting as a whole, I found it kind of sad that there was no sign of human inhabitants. So I made some last minute changes and added a row of windows to the nearest red ship, with some people staring out through the glass (**Fig.12**).

When I got to this point I was happy that the image was finished. I decided to totally change the content during the process and turn it into more of a scene. If you are tempted to do this with one of your practice images then do so with care, as it can prove risky with the overall focus being lost. I decided to take this step however and it worked out well, and was totally worth it!



11



12









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